Plotinus on Love

AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS METAPHYSICS THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF EROS

ALBERTO BERTOZZI

PHILOSOPHIA ANTIQUA · VOLUME 155

BRILL

Plotinus on Love: An Introduction to His Metaphysics through the Concept of *Eros*

Philosophia Antiqua

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By

Alberto Bertozzi

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bertozzi, Alberto, author.
Title: Plotinus on love : an introduction to his metaphysics through the concept of Eros / by Alberto Bertozzi.
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2021] | Series: Philosophia antiqua, 0079-1687 ; volume 155 | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020034505 (print) | LCCN 2020034506 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004441002 (hardback) | ISBN 9789004441026 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Plotinus. Enneads. III, 5 (50) | Erōs (The Greek word) | Love–Philosophy. | One (The One in philosophy) | Neoplatonism.
Classification: LCC B693.E53 B47 2021 (print) | LCC B693.E53 (ebook) | DDC 186/.4–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020034505
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020034506

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: “Brill.” See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0079-1687
ISBN 978-90-04-44100-2 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-44102-6 (e-book)

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to Elaine and Livia

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Καὶ ἕως τί ἐστιν ἀνωτέρω τοῦ παρόντος, αἴρεται φύσει ἄνω αἰρομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ δόντος τὸν ἔρωτα.

PLOTINUS VI.7 [38] 22.17–19

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank those who substantially contributed to this work in or from its early stages. In particular, my gratitude goes to Adriaan Peperzak, who has been an example of thoughtful scholarship and of supportive and friendly mentorship, both as a teacher and as the director of the dissertation from which this project moved its first steps. It would really have pleased me to be able to thank in person the late Gregory Dobrov, who graciously offered his expertise with grammatical queries on Greek texts in early versions of this study. I am also grateful to the Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation for its generous support when this project was still in the form of a dissertation proposal, even if one intending to do something quite different from what I try to accomplish here.

The students of Plotinus to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for teaching me something about his thought, even when I occasionally disagree with some of their interpretations, are too many to be mentioned here individually. Regardless, their names are gathered in the Bibliography, and the extent of their contribution may be roughly estimated from the space each name takes up in the Index of Modern Authors. For obvious reasons, that index may not include the name of the anonymous reader appointed by the publisher, to whom I express my appreciation for a number of helpful suggestions which contributed to give this project a sharper focus. I retain full ownership of the shortcomings that remain in matters of content.

At a time when the working conditions have been far from ideal due to the ongoing pandemic, sincere thanks are due also to the publisher's editorial team for their flexibility with deadlines.

A special word of gratitude goes to family and friends close and far, in particular my dear parents and immediate family: my acknowledgment of their love and constant encouragement is not less heartfelt for being expressed collectively and conventionally.

Above all, I thank Elaine, my wife. Through her support, patience, and, quite simply, her being near me, she has been showing me concretely many of the forms that love can take.

Abbreviations

ARMSTRONG	Plotinus, *Enneads*: Armstrong 1966–1988
DK	*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*: Diels and Kranz 1954
HS$_1$	*Plotini opera* (*ed. maior*): Henry and Schwyzer 1951–1973
HS$_2$	*Plotini opera* (*ed. minor*): Henry and Schwyzer 1964–1982
SVF	*Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*: von Arnim 1903–1924
VP	Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*: HS$_2$ I, 1–38 (Greek); ARMSTRONG I, 1–85 (translation)

Orders and Titles of the Treatises of the *Enneads*

Porphyry's Order and Titles

(VP 24–26; the translation of the titles is from ARMSTRONG)

Ennead I

I.1 [53]	What is the living being, and what is man?
I.2 [19]	On virtues
I.3 [20]	On dialectic
I.4 [46]	On well-being
I.5 [36]	On whether well-being increases with time
I.6 [1]	On beauty
I.7 [54]	On the primal Good and the other goods
I.8 [51]	On what are and whence come evils
I.9 [16]	On going out of the body

Ennead II

II.1 [40]	On heaven (On the universe)
II.2 [14]	On the movement of heaven
II.3 [52]	On whether the stars are causes
II.4 [12]	On matter
II.5 [25]	On what exists potentially and what actually
II.6 [17]	On substance, or on quality
II.7 [37]	On complete transfusion
II.8 [35]	On sight, or how distant objects appear small
II.9 [33]	Against the Gnostics

Ennead III

III.1 [3]	On destiny
III.2 [47]	On providence I
III.3 [48]	On providence II
III.4 [15]	On our allotted guardian spirit

III.5 [50]	On love
III.6 [26]	On the impassivity of things without body
III.7 [45]	On eternity and time
III.8 [30]	On nature and contemplation and the One
III.9 [13]	Various considerations

Ennead IV

IV.1 [21]	On the essence of the soul II[1]
IV.2 [4]	On the essence of the soul I
IV.3 [27]	On difficulties about the soul I
IV.4 [28]	On difficulties about the soul II
IV.5 [29]	On difficulties about the soul III, or on sight
IV.6 [41]	On sense-perception and memory
IV.7 [2]	On the immortality of the soul
IV.8 [6]	On the descent of the soul into bodies
IV.9 [8]	If all souls are one

Ennead V

V.1 [10]	On the three primary hypostases
V.2 [11]	On the origin and order of the beings which come after the First
V.3 [49]	On the knowing hypostases and that which is beyond
V.4 [7]	How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One
V.5 [32]	That the intelligibles are not outside Intellect, and on the Good
V.6 [24]	On the fact that that which is beyond being does not think, and on what is the primary and what the secondary thinking principle
V.7 [18]	On the question whether there are ideas of particulars
V.8 [31]	On the intelligible beauty
V.9 [5]	On Intellect, the forms, and being

---

[1] The Porphyrian order and numeration of Enneads IV.1 and IV.2 was inverted by Ficino (1492). HS1 and HS2 follow Ficino for the numeration but print the treatises in reverse order. I follow the numeration of HS$_1$ and HS$_2$. For a brief account of the matter, see Igal (1982–1998, II, 277–278).

Ennead VI

VI.1 [42]	On the kinds of being I
VI.2 [43]	On the kinds of being II
VI.3 [44]	On the kinds of being III
VI.4 [22]	On the presence of being, one and the same, everywhere as a whole I
VI.5 [23]	On the presence of being, one and the same, everywhere as a whole II
VI.6 [34]	On numbers
VI.7 [38]	How the multitude of the forms came into being, and on the Good
VI.8 [39]	On free will and the will of the One
VI.9 [9]	On the Good or the One

Chronological Order

(VP 4–6)

1	I.6	**10**	V.1	**19**	I.2	**28**	IV.4	**37**	II.7	**46**	I.4
2	IV.7	**11**	V.2	**20**	I.3	**29**	IV.5	**38**	VI.7	**47**	III.2
3	III.1	**12**	II.4	**21**	IV.1	**30**	III.8	**39**	VI.8	**48**	III.3
4	IV.2	**13**	III.9	**22**	VI.4	**31**	V.8	**40**	II.1	**49**	V.3
5	V.9	**14**	II.2	**23**	VI.5	**32**	V.5	**41**	IV.6	**50**	III.5
6	IV.8	**15**	III.4	**24**	V.6	**33**	II.9	**42**	VI.1	**51**	I.8
7	V.4	**16**	I.9	**25**	II.5	**34**	VI.6	**43**	VI.2	**52**	II.3
8	IV.9	**17**	II.6	**26**	III.6	**35**	II.8	**44**	VI.3	**53**	I.1
9	VI.9	**18**	V.7	**27**	IV.3	**36**	I.5	**45**	III.7	**54**	I.7

Introduction

One of the most obvious difficulties in dealing with virtually every aspect of Plotinus' thought is to find a point of entry in his philosophical universe which would not presuppose knowledge of the rest of that universe. Part of the problem is owing to the fact that Plotinus' writings, unlike Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, for example, do not attempt to reproduce a system, but rather discuss particular problems whose solutions are intelligible on the basis of a set of internally coherent principles which, though never made explicit *more geometrico* by Plotinus himself, constitute the indispensable background of those discussions. Thus, in trying to make this background as explicit as possible, Plotinus scholars provide us with relatively systematic accounts of his thought that one will hardly ever encounter in the *Enneads* themselves. Several of these accounts revolve around the ideas of derivation or procession of all reality from a single source—the One—and of ascent or return to it.[1]

The contents of the work lying before you follow in the wake of this expository and systematizing method or tradition.[2] What is peculiar to the present account is that it unfolds from the standpoint of ἔρως,[3] or love. In other words, the interpretive systematization of the Plotinian universe will have love as its guiding concept. This is not to say that love is the *only* concept by which a systematic reconstruction or a survey of Plotinus' metaphysics is possible, but simply that it is *one* such concept among what are perhaps some more familiar possibilities, such as unity, being, participation, and presumably others. In

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[1] See for instance the relatively short accounts by Armstrong (1953, 27–41; ARMSTRONG I, xi–xxviii; 1967, 236–268), Wallis (1995, 47–90), and Igal (1982–1998, I, 23–35, 92–101), and the two classic monographs by Trouillard (1955b and 1955a); see also de Gandillac (1966, 55–66), O'Meara (1993, especially chapters 6, 7, and 10), Gerson (1994, in particular chapters 1, 3, 9, and 10), Smith (2004, 7–74), Emilsson (2017, particularly chapters 3, 4, 5, 9, and 10), in part Arnou (1967), as well as Reale (2004, VIII, 51–52, 75–83, 171–186), who admittedly focuses on the notion of procession and deals with that of return only marginally. For an account of the notions of procession and conversion in the broader context of Neoplatonism, see Lloyd (1990, chapters 4 and 5).

[2] A clear advantage of this method is its pedagogical force. One of its most obvious disadvantages is that in it the explicitly close reading of the text of the *Enneads* is often replaced by a synoptic view of the whole, while the particular questions and problems and the likely interlocutors of Plotinus' treatises may at times fall out of sight or appear tangential to the discussion due to the focus on the larger picture. I hope that Chapter 3, focusing on *Enneads* III.5 [50], may provide a sample of how one might try partially to remedy this disadvantage.

[3] The Greek term ἔρως will be transliterated and italicized without diacritical marks throughout the text. The related term "erotic" (and "erotically") will be used to mean "pertaining to *eros*" (and "in a manner pertaining to *eros*") in the broad Plotinian sense of the word, a meaning which includes but is not restricted to the sexual sphere.

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short, I will attempt to introduce and clarify some of the fundamental aspects of Plotinus' philosophy in terms of love, both with regard to the derivation or procession of all reality from one single principle, the One, and for the return or ascent of the individual soul to the same principle.

I can think of two main reasons for a study on the notion of love in the philosophy of Plotinus, assuming for the moment that such a study is warranted by what can be found in the *Enneads* themselves. The first reason is the partial lack of a reconstruction of his metaphysics through the concept of love. The literature on love in Plotinus' thought which has come to my attention can be divided in two groups. First, we have works that focus on Plotinus' treatise *On eros* (*Enneads* III.5 [50]), specifically: two book-length commentaries, respectively by A. M. Wolters and by P. Hadot; one chapter in a book on Plotinus by M. de Gandillac and one in a doctoral thesis on love in Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius by D. A. Vasilakis; an article by A. Smith.[4] While I will deal with *Enneads* III.5 [50] in Chapter 3, this study is not a thorough analysis of the treatise on *eros*, but an attempt to demonstrate the systematic significance of love for Plotinus' philosophy from the entirety of his corpus. The second group of works on love in Plotinus takes us beyond the treatise on love, *Enneads* III.5 [50], and includes: one substantial chapter in a study on love and the soul in Plato, Plotinus, and Origen by J. M. Rist; two thematic monographs, respectively by J. Lacrosse (*L'amour chez Plotin. Érōs hénologique, érōs noétique, érōs psychique*) and A. Pigler (*Plotin, une métaphysique de l'amour. L'amour comme structure du monde intelligible*).[5] Lacrosse focuses mainly on the types of *eros* that are proper to each hypostasis, while Pigler chiefly analyzes the role of love in the process of derivation of all reality from a single source, the One. In this study I make use of their works, but I also go beyond them in at least one important respect, namely: I show not only the difference of *eros* in each hypostasis (Lacrosse) and its importance for understanding the process of derivation of all reality from the One (Pigler), but also its systematic relevance for the process of ascent of the individual soul to the One.

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[4] Wolters (1984), P. Hadot (1990); de Gandillac (1966, 109–127), Vasilakis (2014, 13–90); Smith (2007). To these works we might add two articles: one by J. M. Dillon (1969), more narrowly focused on Plotinus' exegesis of the *Symposium* myth in *Enneads* III.5 [50], and one by R. Karul (2011) in Slovak, which unfortunately I am unable to read. Lastly, as of December 1, 2020, a commentary on *Enneads* III.5 [50] by S. Magrin was still listed as forthcoming on the Parmenides Publishing website (*The Plotinus Series*): *www.parmenides.com/publications/publications-plotinus.html*.

[5] Rist (1964, 56–112); Lacrosse (1994), Pigler (2002). There is a doctoral dissertation in modern Greek on *eros* in Plotinus by P. K. Damaskos (2000), but since, regrettably, I do not read modern Greek, I was unable to benefit from it. In the context of this introductory survey, I omit works that either focus on specific aspects of Plotinus' views on love (e.g., Mazur 2009), rather than on what we may loosely call its sytematic relevance for his philosophy as a whole, or study Plotinus' understanding of love primarily in relation to the thought of other authors (e.g., Zwollo 2018, 358–382).

The second reason attesting to the need of a study on the concept of love in Plotinus is what I take to be the systematic significance of love for an understanding of his philosophy. Put differently, I think that Plotinus' metaphysics, both in its fundamental concepts and as a whole, can be explained in terms of love. My hope is that this study will contribute to our understanding of Plotinus by showing that what in his philosophy may appear as a marginal concept or a Platonic residue is actually one of its essential and pervasive features. More specifically, I will try to show that the notion of *eros* illustrates the systematic character of Plotinus' thought by employing it as a conceptual passkey that allows the reader of the *Enneads* to access virtually all aspects of his metaphysics.

My main claim is not that Plotinus' understanding of love—what we might call his *erotics*—is immediately available as a system to the cursory reader with little effort nor that it is completely free of interpretive problems. The unusual difficulty of the *Enneads* seems to preclude these possibilities. The claim is rather that if one can speak at all of a Plotinian erotics, this can emerge only as a laborious interpretive reconstruction from a plurality of arguments and statements which, despite their thematic heterogeneousness and lack of immediate transparency, can be found to form a generally coherent picture.

It is safe to assume that one cannot attempt such a feat without including some extensive background on some of the main lines of Plotinus' philosophy. For this reason, this work may also serve as an introduction to some of the major themes and structures of Plotinus' metaphysics and as an overview of his thought. As such, it should be of interest not only to those readers who, being already familiar with Plotinus and Neoplatonism, wish to investigate the relevance of love in his philosophy, but also to a broader audience which may include advanced students and researchers in such fields as ancient philosophy, metaphysics, aesthetics, psychology, religious studies, and intellectual history in general.

Before I go on to present a survey of the material of this study, I wish to provide a quick word on my reasons for considering *eros* the privileged term of love in the *Enneads*. Plotinus' jargon of love and desire is varied[6] and rather loose. As a general warning to the reader of the *Enneads*, Rist points out that

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[6] Following is a merely quantitative list of some of the most important terms of love and desire used by Plotinus. Of the numbers in parentheses, the first refers to the occurrences of the term in question, the second to the occurrences of its immediate verbal, adjectival, and substantive cognates (cf. relevant entries in Radice and Bombacigno 2004). Composite nouns (e.g., φιλομαθής) are not included in the calculation. Here is the list: ἀγάπη (0, 31); ἀφροδίσιος (5, 0); βούλησις (4, 150); δίωξις (1, 28); ἐπιθυμία (70, 53); ἔρως (65), ῎Ερως

"Plotinus' use of terminology is not always a guide to his thought."[7] And as Arnou remarks specifically about Plotinus' terminology of love, "entre tous ces termes ἔρως, ἔφεσις, πόθος, ὄρεξις, ὁρμή, il ne reste chez Plotin que des nuances, qui souvent s'effacent."[8] If I will partly disregard Arnou's otherwise keen observation and prevalently use *eros* as the choice term for love in the *Enneads*, it is because it seems reasonable to maintain that Plotinus himself, both in his treatise on love, *Enneads* III.5 [50], and in a number of selected passages (most notably, VI.7 [38] 22.7–10, 17–19, 31.17–22, 32.24–29, 34.14–15, VI.8 [39] 15.1–2, VI.9 [9] 9.24–46), singles out *eros* from an array of terms of love and desire he had available to express a wide range of affective phenomena, from one's infatuation with a beautiful body to the self-love of the One,[9] which none of those other terms taken singly would have sufficed to express (Section 2 of Chapter 3 will be enough, I hope, to justify this claim). One of the reasons for this, in turn, seems to be that *eros* was Plato's own term of choice for his investigation of the phenomenon of love, both in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus*.[10]

The treatment of the subject will unfold in two parts, comprising a total of six chapters. The main goal of Part 1 is to illustrate how the notion of love is operative throughout Plotinus' metaphysics in the process of derivation of all reality from one single source, the One, whereas in Part 2 I take into consideration the relevance of love in the soul's journey of ascent or return to the same source.[11] Plotinus' philosophy is thus intended as an organic whole with love as its guiding theme and the One as both the origin and the terminus of all love.

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(27), and their adjectival and verbal cognates ἐρωτικός (10) and ἐράω (39); ἔφεσις (54, 90); θέλησις (10, 178); θυμός (34, 18) and its cognate προθυμία (10, 3); ἵμερος (0, 1); ὄρεξις (50, 26); ὁρμή (31, 25); πόθος (7, 18); σπουδή (7, 77); φιλία (6, 51); ὠδίς (10, 6).

[7] Rist (1967, 43).

[8] Arnou (1967, 63); see also Gerson (1994, 151), who endorses Arnou's observation.

[9] By subsuming the soul's love for the One under the umbrella of affective phenomena, I do not mean to imply that it must occur to the soul accidentally, or as an affection in a narrow sense, nor that the *object* of this love displays itself immediately as a phenomenon. The term "affective" here simply qualifies the kind of conditions wherein the soul finds itself directed toward a desideratum. As we shall see in Chapter 3, for Plotinus there is at least one type of *eros* that belongs to the soul essentially and as such is not an affection in a narrow sense.

[10] Plato, on his part, may have chosen the term ἔρως from among other terms available to him due to its semantic breadth. As Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004, 45– 46) point out in their analysis of the *Symposium*, "for Plato's purposes the choice of *Erôs* for praise has the advantages that the word (1) can designate the god or the superhuman force of love itself, (2) may signify the concrete experience of being in love with or falling in love with a particular individual while bearing a range of other cognate meanings, and (3) is distinguished from the common words for sex derived from the goddess, Aphrodite."

[11] A similar thesis was cautiously adumbrated by Armstrong (1967, 261–263).

In Part 1, Chapter 1 (*The Derivation of the Many from the One: The Problem and Its Plotinian Solution*) deals with the issue of the derivation of multiplicity from a single simple source and provides a conceptual framework for Plotinian metaphysics from the standpoint of derivation. In Chapter 2 (*The Derivation of All Reality from the One as Erotic Procession*) I use *eros* as the key concept to explain how all reality derives and unfolds from one single principle. I argue that Plotinus conceives the source of the procession of all reality as utterly simple power. This power, in turn, is understood as a love—what I will call henologic *eros*—which the One bears to itself and only to itself and which at the same time is productive of otherness. What derives from the One also possesses *eros*. However, while in the One love is self-contained, in that it aims at nothing other than itself, in all derived reality it is directed to something other than that in which it inheres, namely, to the One understood as the Good. The derivation of reality is thus conceived as an overflowing of love productive of love—a thesis which has already been defended extensively by Pigler.[12] Moreover, the communication of all *eros* from the One is also what causes derived reality to structure itself hierarchically in the fully formed hypostases of Intellect and soul, as well as in the sensible universe. The unfolding of each derived hypostasis occurs as a three-phase non-temporal (or a-temporal) event: first, the superabundance of *eros* proceeding from the higher hypostasis; second, the reversion of this *eros* toward the generating hypostasis; third, the communication of *eros* (gradually diminished both in intensity and in proximity to its ultimate desideratum, the One) which will constitute the first stage of the next hypostasis, until with lower matter the erotic power of reversion (and thus the ability to generate something after itself) comes to a halt.[13]

In Part 2, the focus shifts to the theme of the return of the soul to the One, with its four chapters addressing three major aspects of this theme: in Chapter 3, the nature and variety of *eros*, with special focus on the *eros* which belongs connaturally to the soul as the very condition of possibility of the ascent; in Chapter 4, the One as the Good, or the ultimate goal of the soul's innate love; and finally, in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the path that the soul, naturally possessed with love, is to tread to reach its goal. The main goal of Chapter 3 (*The Nature and Variety of* Eros*: A Guided Tour through* Enneads *III.5* [*50*] On Eros) is to show that the possibility of the soul's ascent to the One is grounded in the primordial love for it present in the soul. For this reason, I introduce some basic classifications of *eros* as it is found in the individual soul, which, as we shall see in the last two chapters, is the protagonist of the ascent to the One. I do this while broadly commenting the treatise on love, *Enneads* III.5 [50], a treatise in which Plotinus presents his views about *eros* as an interpretation of some material from Plato's dialogues and from some traditional myths on the same topic.

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[12] Pigler (2002).

[13] The order of the stages of this threefold event departs from the more traditional pattern of rest, procession, and reversion with which students of Neoplatonism are familiar (see Chapter 2 note 26 for some references). The reason for this departure is that presently I am focusing on *derived* hypostases (thus, not on the One); and although the event I am introducing is non-temporal, the question of explaining how a given hypostasis depends on a higher one logically requires that we begin with the stage at which that hypostasis is generated, hence my giving qualified precedence to procession, rather than rest, since rest pertains to the being of a fully formed hypostasis.

It is in Chapter 4 (*The One as the Supremely Loved, or the Universal Final Cause*) that the focus of the discussion shifts explicitly to the movement inverse to the process of derivation: the traditional theme of the return of the soul to the One, here conceived as the Good, or the universal final cause. This theme is again investigated from the perspective of love, since to speak of the One as the Good means to say that it is the final terminus of the connatural love belonging to the soul introduced in Chapter 3. In particular, I argue that for Plotinus the soul's possibility of being directed toward a universal final cause (as found, for example, in Aristotle) remains unintelligible unless one views the final cause as also the origin of the love directed toward it. Thus, the One is that which is supremely loved (ἐρασμιώτατον, ἀγαπητότατον), or the Good, not only because it is universally desired but because it is at the same time the origin of the love by which it is so desired. Lastly, in Chapter 5 (*The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent: Prolegomena to the Journey*) and Chapter 6 (*The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent: The Stages of the Journey*) I investigate the process of attunement of the individual soul to the Good. This process, technically referred to as the ascent, takes place as a thorough disciplining of the soul's affective commitments, or its *eros*. The goal of the ascent, whose major presuppositions, terminology, features, and stages are the main themes investigated in these two chapters, is gradually to narrow the gap that separates the individual soul from the final aim of its desire, the Good, until this gap is reduced to a minimum and the soul, completely transformed (rather than annihilated) into pure love for the One, comes in contact with its desideratum.

Taken together, the two parts of this study are like two halves of the same metaphysical diptych—one which, echoing the title of the work by Pigler referenced earlier, may aptly be called "a metaphysics of love."[14] Part 1 shows how love is operative from the point of view of procession, or the derivation of all reality form one single source, the One. Conversely, Part 2 shows how love is operative in the process of return, or the soul's purificatory movement toward its source taken as the highest desideratum, the One qua Good. As such, love constitutes the origin, the culmination, and the regulative force of the double movement that characterizes Plotinus' metaphysics—the process of derivation of all reality from the One and the process of return of the soul to it—as well as the fundamental link between the different levels of the Plotinian universe.

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[14] Pigler (2002).

Were it not for the chronological element introduced by occasional internal references, the contents of Part 1 and Part 2 could be read in reverse order, since the realities they treat are the same, only approached from the opposite poles of Plotinus' metaphysics. As Trouillard observes, the two processes—derivation and return—"n'apparaissent antithétiques que dans l'image spatiale qui les représente comme des événements extraposés."[15]

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Unless otherwise indicated, the Greek text of Plotinus' *Enneads* and that of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* (VP) are cited from the *editio minor* of P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer (HS$_2$), my only regular departure from this edition being the capitalization of the first word after a period; the English translations are by A. H. Armstrong (ARMSTRONG). While I am indebted to existing translations of Enneads III.5 [50],[16] unless otherwise noted translations of passages from this treatise are mine. References to the *Enneads* are typically given without mention of the author and title of the work (e.g., V.1 [10] 1.1 = Plotinus, *Enneads* V.1 [10] 1.1). Unless otherwise indicated, the Greek text of Plato's works is that of Burnet (1899–1907). Aristotle's Greek text is from Bekker (1831–1870, I–II), except for the works listed individually in Section 2 of the Bibliography. Section 1 and Section 2 of the Bibliography provide a list of all the editions and translations of pre-modern authors I have referenced; the same titles are given in full in Section 3 of the same Bibliography under the name of their editor(s) and/or translator(s).

Throughout this study I capitalize a few terms (except when I am reporting a text verbatim, in which case I adhere to it) when they refer technically to some of the entities in Plotinus' metaphysics. I already used several of these terms in this Introduction. Chief among them are the following.

(1) The One and several titles used to speak about it (e.g., Good, Principle, Source, etc.).

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[15] Trouillard (1955a, 3).

[16] Particularly ARMSTRONG, Wolters (1994), and Gerson (2018).

(2) Intellect, along with Forms (or Ideas), Being, and Beauty (or the Beautiful) when these are used as shorthand descriptions of the noetic realm. The term “intellect” will not be capitalized when it refers to intellective activity in general or to the particular intellects connected to individual souls, as well as when it is not clear whether Plotinus means Intellect or individual intellect. Due to this occasional lack of clarity, a reading of the text of the *Enneads* even in this basic respect often entails some degree of interpretation.

(3) Soul, which I capitalize most often in the hyphenated expressions “Soul-Hypostasis” (i.e., soul which is simply soul and the source of all soul, not to be confused with the expression “the hypostasis soul” as denoting the whole of psychic manifestations), and “World-Soul” (i.e., the soul of the cosmos). On its own, “Soul” typically denotes the Soul-Hypostasis, including the first phase or stage in the constitution of the Soul-Hypostasis from Intellect. When the term “soul” appears in lower case, it indicates either soul in general, without reference to any of its specific manifestations (in which case it is typically used anarthrously), or individual embodied souls, depending on the context. The lower case “soul” is also used when it is unclear whether Plotinus means the Soul-Hypostasis, the World-Soul, or individual souls—which, as in the case of “intellect,” will require some degree of interpretation.

(4) Finally, I capitalize several expressions indicating what I take to be standard principles in Plotinian metaphysics (e.g., Principle of Prior Simplicity, Principle of Double Activity, Principle of Affinity, etc.). I gathered these principles in the Appendix.

PART 1

The Derivation of All Reality from the One as Erotic Procession

Καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ ἔρως ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔρως, ἅτε οὐκ ἄλλως καλὸς ἢ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ.

PLOTINUS VI.8 [39] 15.1–2

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CHAPTER 1

The Derivation of the Many from the One

The Problem and Its Plotinian Solution

The focus of this and the next chapter is Plotinus' answer to the following question: How does multiplicity derive from what is one, or utterly simple (V.9 [5] 14.13: πῶς ἐξ ἑνὸς πλῆθος)? Plotinus' general term for the derivation of any given level of reality from its source (and of all things *ultimately* from the One) is πρόοδος (e.g., IV.8 [6] 6.5, V.5 [32] 3.9). I follow D. J. O'Meara[1] in referring to this event with the more neutral terms "derivation" and, less frequently, "procession," while aware that probably there is no really neutral term which may truly do justice to what Plotinus wishes to express. For example, both derivation and procession, just like the original πρόοδος, have spatial connotations that obviously do not belong to the emergence of a metaphysical order of reality from its source as intended by Plotinus. In any case, I employ the term "derivation" in partial contrast with other such expressions as "emanation," "production," "making," "creation," and so on. The reason for this is to distinguish the event that I take Plotinus was likely to have in mind from the ideas often associated with the other terms I just mentioned, which may suggest: that the process entails deliberation and/or fabrication and is material in character (as in the case of making and production); that what springs from a given source diminishes or otherwise affects the source and/or is wholly homogeneous with it (as might be the case with emanation and the notion of overflowing); connections to ideas, Christian or otherwise, that are not central to or explicit in the Plotinian question (as might be the case with the idea of creation *ex nihilo*).[2]

How, then, does multiplicity derive from unity, the many from the One?

1 Necessity of Deriving the Many from the One, and the Uniqueness of the Principle

Before I investigate the role played by love in Plotinus' answer to this question, it is the question itself that we must try to understand. Plotinus provides

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[1] O'Meara (1993, 60–61).

[2] Note, however, that while these ideas provide useful conceptual distinctions, not all of them are necessarily at variance with Plotinus' views (cf. Emilsson 2017, 93–94).

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similar formulations of it at III.8 [30] 10.14–19 and V.1 [10] 6.2–8. The latter text reads:[3]

> For the soul now knows that these things must be, but longs to answer the question repeatedly discussed also by the ancient philosophers, how from the One, if it is such as we say it is, anything else, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number, came into existence, and why it did not on the contrary remain by itself, but such a great multiplicity flowed from it as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One.

This question and its Plotinian answer, concisely put forth chiefly in *Enneads* V.4 [7] *How that which is after the First comes from the First and on the One*, include a cluster of related problems, listed here in the order in which I will discuss them in this chapter. First, why should the many derive from one principle and why should there be only one such principle, the Principle?[4] Second, since the Principle will turn out to be of an unqualifiedly simple nature, how can we speak of it? Third, how or in what manner do the many derive from the One? And lastly, are the Plotinian hypostases real things with a relatively independent existence or aspects-modes of one single, all-encompassing reality? A summary treatment of these questions constitutes the necessary framework to understand the workings of love in the process of derivation presented in the next chapter.

The notion of a single source of all reality had been part of the Greek philosophical tradition well before Plotinus. Both Plato and Aristotle might have conceived of something like a single source of all things, respectively in terms of the Form or Idea of the Good as the cause of both knowledge and the existence of Forms or Ideas in the central books of the *Republic* (*Republic* VI–VII, and most notably VI.509b2–10), and as the Unmoved or First Mover of *Metaphysics* XII, especially chapters 6–7 (cf. also *Physics* VIII, especially chapters 4–6).

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[3] Plotinus V.1 [10] 6.2–8: Νῦν μὲν γὰρ τὴν ἀνάγκην τοῦ [3] εἶναι ταῦτα ἡ ψυχὴ ἔχει, ἐπιποθεῖ δὲ τὸ θρυλλούμενον δὴ [4] τοῦτο καὶ παρὰ τοῖς πάλαι σοφοῖς, πῶς ἐξ ἑνὸς τοιούτου [5] ὄντος, οἷον λέγομεν τὸ ἓν εἶναι, ὑπόστασιν ἔσχεν ὁτιοῦν [6] εἴτε πλῆθος εἴτε δυὰς εἴτε ἀριθμός, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖνο [7] ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ, τοσοῦτον δὲ πλῆθος ἐξερρύη, ὃ ὁρᾶται μὲν ἐν [8] τοῖς οὖσιν, ἀνάγειν δὲ αὐτὸ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο ἀξιοῦμεν.

[4] Along with "Principle" or "Origin" (ἀρχή) and the more frequent "the Good" (τὸ ἀγαθόν, τἀγαθόν), Plotinus uses several other terms as epithets of the One. These terms include: "the First" (τὸ πρῶτον), "Simple" (ἁπλοῦν), "Source" (πηγή), "Root" (ῥίζα), "God" (θεός), "Father" (πατήρ), "the Beyond" (τὸ ἐπέκεινα), "Cause" (αἰτία; αἴτιον), "End" (τέλος). For references, see the relevant entries in Sleeman and Pollett (1980).

But for different reasons, one might wonder whether Plato and Aristotle were sufficiently explicit or overall successful in their attempts. In Aristotle's case, the Unmoved Mover is understood as the universal final cause, but it is not altogether clear whether it can also be legitimately conceived of as the ἀρχή of the existence of things. I will touch on this problem in Chapter 4. As for Plato, attempts have been made to show that the Good of the central books of the *Republic* fulfills the function of ἀρχή. For our purposes, the question is whether the Good can be understood as the one and only ἀρχή, and it is precisely on this point that scholarly opinions are at variance, ranging from a "pronounced monism" to a "thoroughgoing dualism,"[5] in particular when the dialogues are read alongside the so-called unwritten doctrines (ἄγραφα δόγματα), which seem to have been an integral part of every Neoplatonist's reading of Plato.[6]

Thus, we may ask whether there ever was a Greek or Hellenized thinker who explicitly upheld the single origin thesis for what it truly means, namely, that all reality derives from—that is to say, owes its existence to—one single source, not from the interaction of two or more independent sources of which one may enjoy preeminence over the other(s).[7] If we except some anticipations of the thesis in Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and in the *Chaldean Oracles*,[8] we may venture to claim that the one who first formulated it explicitly, extensively, and precisely in the Greek philosophical tradition was Plotinus. To put it more sharply, what the single-source thesis means for our author can be summed up in five points.

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[5] Halfwassen (2012, 143).

[6] Cf. Gerson (in Wallis 1995, ix), Reale (2004, VIII, 57). For an overview of the questions surrounding the issue of the unwritten doctrines, see Nikulin (2012); for collections of sources of Plato's unwritten doctrines see Reale and Richard (2008); for critical assessments of an interpretation of Plato heavily relying on the notion of unwritten doctrines—the so-called esoteric interpretation—see Brisson (1993) and Mann (2006).

[7] The difficulty is made sharper by the fact that virtually all thinkers steeped in the Greek tradition seem to have taken the cosmos (or at least its material element) to be without beginning in time. The question regarding beginnings is particularly urgent with respect to the generation of matter, on which I will touch in the next chapter, and is complicated by two further problems in the history of ancient Platonism, which here I will only sketch without attempting to identify a solution.

(1) The first problem concerns the very concept of matter as Plotinus inherits it and develops it on the basis of some pronouncements in Plato's *Timaeus* and their reception by Aristotle. In the *Timaeus*, Plato famously introduces the notion of the receptacle (ὑποδοχή) of becoming, an entity which is logically prior to both the cosmos and the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water (*Timaeus* 49a5–6, 51a4–b1, 52d2–e5, 69b2–c3). As for Aristotelian matter, considered by itself, it is the primary substratum (τὸ πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον: *Physics* I.9.192a31) of physical things and thus is logically prior to the hylomorphic composite, although it has no separate existence and is never experienced independently of form (see for instance *De generatione et corruptione* II.1.329a24–26, a34–b1; cf. *Metaphysics* VII.3.1029a20–30). Now, Aristotle (*Physics* IV.2.209b11–16) holds that Plato identifies matter and space (χώρα); and since space is conceptually associated with the receptacle in *Timaeus* 52a8–b5, the identity of the Platonic receptacle with Aristotelian matter is quickly established. (The fact that Aristotle mentions a different identification in Plato's so-called unwritted doctrines at *Physics* IV.2.209b13–15 only intensifies the difficulty of this problem.) Predictably, not all interpreters agree about the correctness of the identification of Platonic ὑποδοχή with Aristotelian

(i) Everything derives from the One and depends on it for its existence. Albeit with some caveats, this includes lower matter (as distinguished from intelligible matter), as we shall see in the next chapter. This thesis is expressed repeatedly in the *Enneads*, for instance at VI.7 [38] 23.20–24, where both derivation and dependence in being are stressed. Or again at V.1 [10] 7.22, one of the most concise and least technical statements of the derivation of all reality from the One in Plotinus: "… but all things come from it" (ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ πάντα). The same idea is suggested in a protasis at VI.7 [38]

ὕλη: some criticize it as textually unwarranted (e.g., W. D. Ross 1936, 565–567; Schwyzer 1973, especially 268–272), while others cautiously voice its interpretive plausibility (e.g., Fleet 1995, 164–167; Ferrari 2007, especially 5, 19–21). Finally Plotinus, perhaps in an anticipating instance of the tendency to harmonize Plato and Aristotle that will become more common in Neoplatonic circles after him (see I. Hadot 2015), identifies Plato's receptacle with Aristotelian matter (see II.4 [12] 1.1–4, III.6 [26] 11–12, 13.12–18, 19.14–18; cf. also II.4 [12] 6), although he rejects Aristotle's view that matter and privation are different principles (see I.8 [51] 5.24–25, 11.1–14, II.4 [12] 14, 16.4–8) and does not seem to follow Aristotle's reading of Plato in identifying matter and space (see II.4 [12] 12.11–12, VI.6 [34] 3.16–18; cf. Narbonne 2009). For a brief but perceptive assessment of Plotinus' attitude to Plato and Aristotle, specifically on the issue of matter, see Corrigan (1996, 158–160).

(2) The second problem concerns some disagreement about how to read Plato's account of the fashioning of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*. The idea that this account might not have been literal already had defenders in the ancient Academy (cf. Aristotle, *On the Heavens* I.10.279b32–280a11; *Scholia to Aristotle's On the Heavens* 489a9–12; Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens* 304.3–6) and eventually became a major issue among the Middle Platonists, who provided three main readings of the problem: (i) an allegorical one (Eudorus, Alcinous, Apuleius, and Calvenus Taurus), according to which generation means that the cosmos is permanently changing and dependent on a superior principle; (ii) a literal one (Plutarch, Atticus, Harpocration), according to which the cosmos has a beginning, while formless matter does not; and (iii) a composite one (Severus, Iuncus), according to which the cosmos as such is ungenerated, but the particular cosmos in which we are is generated (see Reale 2004, VII, 139–154). For other brief accounts of the problem and its sources, see Runia (1986, 38–57), Caluori (2015, 25–36).

[8] The single source thesis in some Middle Platonists, Neopythagoreans, and in the *Chaldean Oracles* is expressed in terms of the generation of matter: see for example Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VIII.24–25; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* X.248–283, especially 261–283; Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 181.7–182.6, 230.34–231.27; Syrianus, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 151.14–22; *Chaldean Oracles* fr. 34. For brief accounts of the issue and further primary sources, see Dillon (1996, 128, 342–343, 355, 395); for some secondary sources, see O'Brien (1993, 27 note 24).

23.4–5, which reads: “For if there is something from which all things come…” (Εἰ γὰρ ἔκ του τὰ πάντα…).[9]

(ii) The multiplicity of things deriving from the One, whether taken individually, partially, or as a totality, can in no way be resolved in the One (or vice versa), and so the One is understood as utterly transcending the multiplicity deriving from it. Plotinus states this point emphatically and repeatedly, for instance at *Enneads* VI.9 [9] 6.55: “But the cause of all things is none of them” (Τὸ δὲ πάντων αἴτιον οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐκείνων). Moreover, the One transcends the many not only in the sense that it is other than them, but also in that while the many continue to depend on it for their existence, the One neither depends on them in any way (not even on Intellect: cf. III.8 [30] 11.15–16) nor, having produced them, is it directly involved in their maintenance (see V.5 [32] 12.47–50).[10]

(iii) Derivation does not detract from the simplicity and power of the One (see for example III.8 [30] 9.40–41, 10.28–31, V.1 [10] 7.19–20, V.2 [11] 1.1–2, V.3 [49] 11.16–25, V.4 [7] 1.5–8, V.5 [32] 12.47–50, V.6 [24] 3, VI.7 [38] 16.29–31). Othewise stated, the One, qua Source, is not diminished in any way on account of the derivation of all reality from it.

(iv) While the source of all multiplicity, both corporeal and incorporeal, the One itself is incorporeal (see for instance V.4 [7] 1.17–19 and the entirety of treatise VI.5 [23]).

(v) The process of derivation is a-temporal and necessary (cf. II.9 [33] 3.11–15, III.2 [47] 1.20–26). This is the thesis of the so-called eternity of the cosmos, common to the whole Greek tradition. Plotinus is generally in agreement with this tradition,[11] but with two caveats. First, he insists that the temporal origin of the world in the *Timaeus* myth should not be understood literally (e.g., III.2 [47] 1.20–26, IV.3 [27] 9.12–20, V.8 [31] 12.12–26, VI.7 [38] 3.1–9),[12] and in this he is the heir of a tradition that goes back to the early Academy (cf. note 7 above). Second, he is very careful to distinguish between time and eternity (on which

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[9] This position has been called “émanation intégrale” (O’Brien 1981, 118; 1991, 11; 1993, 27 note 24; 1995, 22; followed by O’Meara 1999b, 25; Corrigan 1996, 262), an expression that I will not use often but which well describes Plotinus’ notion of derivation of all reality from one single source, as long as one maintains that emanation does not imply any diminution in the Source (cf. H. F. Müller 1913, 416–422; Igal, 1982–1998, I, 30) or any separation of derived reality from the One (Gerson 1994, 28–29).

[10] Other passages more or less explicitly affirming the transcendence of the One include: I.8 [51] 7.16–23, III.2 [47] 5.25–32, III.8 [30] 9.35–54, 10.18–19 and 28–31, III.9 [13] 4.8–9, V.1 [10] 6.12–27, V.2 [11] 1.1–2, V.3 [49] 11.16–30, 13.2–5, and chapter 16, V.4 [7] 2.26–42, V.5 [32] 6.9–11, 10.1–5, 12.47–50, 13.17–20, 33–35, VI.8 [39] 18.24, VI.9 [9] 2.44–47, 3.39–40.

[11] See Moreau (1970, 17–26, especially 22–26).

[12] Cf. Wallis (1995, 65), O’Meara (1993, 77–78).

I will dwell briefly in the next chapter), for which reason I generally prefer to refer to the process of derivation as "a-temporal" or "non-temporal" rather than "eternal." As for the claim that this process is necessary, I will touch on it at different stages of this study, and especially in Section 3 of Chapter 4.

We can take these five points to be a rough sketch of Plotinus' basic views on derivation.[13] Now, the main question is: Why *must* all reality be understood as deriving from a single principle? The most concise answer to this interrogative is the longstanding principle that whatever is composite, or made up of parts, *ultimately* derives from, or owes its existence to, something that is simple. With O'Meara, I will refer to this statement as the Principle of Prior Simplicity.[14] The version of this principle given at V.4 [7] 1.5–15[15] is a classic Plotinian text:[16]

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[13] It is not my primary goal to ascertain the originality of Plotinus' single-source thesis historically, but I think it is important at least to try to distinguish his views on the issue from those of Philo of Alexandria. It would appear that Philo's position is the closest to what I take to be Plotinus' views on all counts, except that for Philo, a Jew whose starting point is divinely inspired Scripture, creation seems to mean bringing something into existence from nothing, or "from non-being into being" (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι: *De vita Mosis* II.48.267; see also *Legum allegoriae* III.3.10, *De somniis* I.13.76), even if this still appears to imply the kind of a-temporal process involved in the Plotinian derivation of all reality from the One (e.g., *De opificio mundi* 3.13–15, *Quod Deus immutabilis sit* 6.30–32). More importantly, against the second provision in condition (V) above, Philonian creation is clearly not a necessary process, for it is a free gift from God (e.g., *Legum allegoriae* III.24.78, *Quod Deus immutabilis sit* 23.107; cf. *De opificio mundi* 6.23). By contrast, in Plotinus the element of necessity—in a word, the fact that the cosmos could not *not* exist—prevails, although even in this case necessity does not imply any constraint on the One, which is nothing beyond the will by which it wills itself, as we shall see. On creation in Philo, see Reale (1979) and Radice (1989).

[14] O'Meara (1993, 44–49); cf. Emilsson (2017, 70–72).

[15] V.4 [7] 1.5–15: Δεῖ μὲν γάρ τι πρὸ πάντων εἶναι ἁπλοῦν, τοῦτο καὶ [6] πάντων ἕτερον τῶν μετ' αὐτό, ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὄν, οὐ μεμιγμένον [7] τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερον τρόπον τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεῖναι [8] δυνάμενον, ὂν ὄντως ἕν, οὐχ ἕτερον ὄν, εἶτα ἕν, καθ' οὗ [9] ψεῦδος καὶ τὸ ἓν εἶναι, οὗ μὴ λόγος μηδὲ ἐπιστήμη, [10] ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐπέκεινα λέγεται εἶναι οὐσίας εἰ γὰρ μὴ [11] ἁπλοῦν ἔσται συμβάσεως ἔξω πάσης καὶ συνθέσεως καὶ [12] ὄντως ἕν οὐκ ἂν ἀρχὴ εἴη—αὐταρκέστατόν τε τῷ ἁπλοῦν [13] εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον ἁπάντων· τὸ γὰρ τὸ μὴ πρῶτον ἐνδεὲς [14] τοῦ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, τό τε μὴ ἁπλοῦν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἁπλῶν [15] δεόμενον, ἵν' ᾖ ἐξ ἐκείνων. The italicized terms (*and truly one*) in the English translation render καὶ ὄντως ἕν at lines 11–12 and do not appear in ARMSTRONG, whose translation I am here reporting with the addition of these words.

[16] Some parallels for the Principle of Prior Simplicity include III.8 [30] 9.1–6, 10.20–23, V.3 [49] 12.9–20, 16.12–16; cf. also VI.5 [23] 1.1, VI.2 [43] 2.3–7; longer passages in which the principle is presupposed include V.1 [10] 5, V.6 [24] 3–4, VI.9 [9] 2. For versions of this principle in the Platonic tradition, see Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* X.165.34–166.14; Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 1, as well as 2–6.

> For there must be something simple before all things,[17] and this must be something other than all the things that come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things that derive from it, and all the same able to be present in a different way to these other things, being really one, and not a different being and then one; it is false even to say that it is one, and there is "no concept or knowledge"[18] of it; it is indeed also said to be beyond being.[19] For if it is not to be simple, outside of all coincidence and composition, *and truly one*, it could not be a first principle; and it is the most self-sufficient, because it is simple and the first of all: for that which is not the first needs that which is before it, and what is not simple is in need of its simple components so that it can come into existence from them.[20]

O'Meara observes that there are three different points at issue here. The first is that in this context the parts that compose the whole are not of the kind whose existence depends on the existence of the whole; instead, they have a double existence: both within the composite and independent of it (cf. v.6 [24] 3.10–15).[21] The second point is that when wholes are analyzed into their parts, this analysis will eventually lead to one single element which is unqualifiedly simple, is "presupposed, directly or indirectly, by all composite things," and is "independent of all that derives from it."[22] And thirdly, since the elements of any given compound are not random aggregates, but unified structures with an inner organization, which therefore require a principle of unity (cf. v.3 [49] 12.9–14), the priority of the unifying principle with respect to the composite is better understood as superiority "in power and being." O'Meara explains on the same page: "It is superior in power because it produces the compound. And it is superior in being because it exists at a higher level of perfection: it possesses unity, self-integrity, independence to a greater degree."[23] And, as we shall see, it also possesses love to a greater degree.

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[17] Notice that for Plotinus the Principle of Prior Simplicity is already at work at intermediate levels of unity, as we read at v.3 [49] 16.7–8: "the principle of each group of things is simpler than they are themselves" (ἡ ἀρχὴ ἑκάστων ἁπλουστέρα ἢ αὐτά).

[18] Cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 142a3–4.

[19] Cf. Plato, *Republic* vi.509b9, *Parmenides* 141e9–10.

[20] Cf. v.3 [49] 12.9–14.

[21] O'Meara (1993, 46) remarks: "This dual status is common in Plotinus' universe: soul is both part of (in) the world and separate from it; intellect is both part of (in) soul and above it; and the nature of intellect is such that it derives from something which both composes it and is prior to it, the One. This is no universe where immanence excludes transcendence."

[22] O'Meara (199346, 45); see also O'Meara (1999a, particularly 67–73); cf. Dodds (1960, 3).

[23] O'Meara (1993, 49).

This may suffice as a rough explanation of the Principle of Prior Simplicity and of what Plotinus wishes to accomplish with it. But is the principle itself sufficiently justified? Plotinus seems to take it almost as self-evident, as when in the passage I just quoted in note 17 above, where he argues for the existence of the One beyond Intellect due to the presence of multiplicity in the intelligible realm, he pointedly states: “the principle of each group of things is simpler than they are themselves” (V.3 [49] 16.7–8: see note 17 for the Greek text). In spite of this lack of argumentative conclusiveness, the Principle of Prior Simplicity is not without some obvious attractiveness. In science, for instance, the subsumption of a plurality of phenomena under a unitary law or the reduction of a multiplicity of theories to a single theory may very well suggest that Plotinus’ endorsement of the Principle of Prior Simplicity is not arbitrary, but is a suitable desideratum of a rational approach to reality.[24] Plotinus himself notices that without an absolutely simple unity, any multiplicity, including the noetic multiplicity of Intellect, would be found in a state of dispersion and disorder, and the members of the multiplicity would come together merely by chance (V.3 [49] 12.13–14). Thus, he conjectures that when a multiplicity is normally found in an orderly state, this fact indicates the presence of an ordering unity which is prior to the ordered multiplicity. And as this train of thought is applied to all habitually ordered multiplicities without exception, he takes it as established that the Principle of all things, the One, should be conceived as absolutely simple (e.g., V.3 [49] 12.19–20).

In addition to its absolute simplicity, the Principle is characterized by uniqueness: it must be one and one only (see V.4 [7] 1.15–16, II.3 [52] 6.16–17). The sole reason Plotinus offers for this last claim in treatise V.4 [7] is that if there were two such things, both would be one (V.4 [7] 1.15–16: Τὸ δὴ τοιοῦτον ἓν μόνον δεῖ εἶναι· ἄλλο γὰρ εἰ εἴη τοιοῦτον, ἓν ἂν εἴη τὰ ἄμφω). Given its unqualified simplicity, the Principle cannot be a body, for body is understood to be infinitely divisible (at least conceptually), thus lacking simplicity by definition (V.4 [7] 1.17–18: Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἁπλοῦν σῶμα). One may grant, therefore, that the First will have to be something incorporeal (μὴ σωματική: V.4 [7] 1.19), but what does it mean to say that if there were two such things, both would be one? In other words, what does it mean to say that the simplicity of the Principle implies its uniqueness?

One could reason that there is nothing wrong with maintaining the existence of two (or more) such principles differing *solo numero*, as against Leibniz’s view concerning indiscernibles.[25] Gerson, from whose accounts I borrow in the remainder of this section,[26] remarks that this possibility should be discarded because the uniqueness of the Principle "is supposed to follow from its being the sort of thing it is (τὸ τοιοῦτον [cf. VI.9 [9] 6.23]), namely, one or simple."[27] In support of this conclusion, let us first posit two such principles. Although the two are indiscernible to the inquirer, at least one factor ought to be postulated in order to be able to differentiate them at all. If we do so, this factor must be either essential to the nature of the Principle or inessential. If it is essential, then the one possessing it in addition to all that the two have in common will be the Principle; if it is inessential, the one possessing it is diminished, qua (alleged) Principle, by the very fact of possessing it, thereby *not* being the Principle.[28]

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[24] Cf. Emilsson (2017, 71–72).

[25] Leibniz, *Discours de Metaphysique* 9 (= Leibniz 1875–1890, IV, 433–434).

The fact is that one can argue *against* the uniqueness of the One only by failing to take its nature into consideration. At VI.8 [39] 7.39–41, Plotinus conjectures about the One that "it possesses uniqueness [τὸ μοναχὸν] not because it is obstructed by something else but because it is this very thing [τῷ τοῦτο αὐτὸ εἶναι] and is, we may say [οἷον], satisfied with itself [ἀρέσκειν ἑαυτῷ] and has nothing better than itself." "Evidently," as Gerson writes, "unqualified simplicity is thought to be incapable of duplication,"[29] and duplication is impossible because the absolutely simple is identical with the First (τὸ πρῶτον: see V.4 [7] 1.1–4), whose essential priority is incompatible with the very notion of duplication.

Plotinus is not quite as explicit on this point, but I believe that what he has in mind is precisely this necessary connection between the nature of the Principle and its uniqueness, or the fact that uniqueness is essential to its nature: "this uniqueness comes from the principle itself" (τὸ δὲ μοναχὸν τοῦτο παρ' αὐτοῦ: VI.8 [39] 9.13). Thus, incapability of duplication here should not be understood as a shortcoming, but as a necessity grounded in the very nature of the Principle. As I shall argue in the next chapter, the simplicity of the One is the simplicity of an infinite self-sufficient power (see V.5 [32] 10.21–23, VI.5 [23] 12.3–7, VI.9 [9] 6), which as such, of necessity, does not engender, nor is it engendered by, an infinite equal to itself. As infinite power, the One lacks limits, thus resisting the notion of multiplication.

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[26] See Gerson (1994, 3–14; 1990, 201–212).

[27] Gerson (1994, 5).

[28] Cf. Emilsson (2017, 72). A similar but more elaborate argument for God's unity (what I here called uniqueness), rejecting the hypothesis of the existence of two necessary beings, is found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* I.42.9; cf. also *Summa contra gentiles* I.42.3 and *Summa theologiae* I.q11.a3.co. (second argument), both focusing on divine perfection.

[29] Gerson (1994, 5).

This implies that the One cannot be thought of as an individual belonging to a species, for when it comes to species, including the species of incorporeal intellects, there is nothing in principle limiting the number of individuals that can belong to it.[30] But this cannot be the case with the Principle if this is to be truly the First. Thus, Plotinus' remark that if there were two such things both would be one means, not that these two things are both first although we have no way to establish how they differ, but rather that either none of the two is the First, and so a new First must be posited, or else that their very nature excludes the possibility of their being, as it were, multiple individuals within the same genus, and so they are not two but one.

But what does it mean for Plotinus to say that something is simple (ἁπλοῦν)? Very broadly, from the perspective of those who try to name the simple, it means that nothing can be predicated (κατηγορεῖσθαι) of it (see III.8 [30] 10.29–30). More than that, in fact: Plotinus writes that to add something to the mere expression "the Good" is, rather than a proper addition to it, the addition of a deficiency, as if a diminution of its reputation (III.8 [30] 11.12–13, V.5 [32] 13.7–17). For this reason, Plotinus states that the One as that which is unqualifiedly simple has no essence (οὐσία). That is to say, it cannot be circumscribed by a limit or assigned any specific content: it cannot be objectified, classified, named, and thus kown alongside the things that derive from it (see III.8 [30] 9.53–54, VI.9 [9] 5.30; cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 142a3–8). Strictly speaking, even to call it "One" perhaps is inappropriate and a mere negation of multiplicity (V.5 [32] 6.26–37); when we do so, we do it in an ordinary fashion (κοινῶς: VI.9 [9] 5.32) and certainly we are not to imply that what is called "One" is first something else, and One only successively (VI.9 [9] 5.31–33). On the contrary, for the One to be and to be one are identical (V.4 [7] 1.8, VI.9 [9] 5.32–33). This is not the case for everything that is derived from the One; that is, in everything but the One, unity is provided from without (ultimately, for Plotinus by the One itself) as something distinct from each thing's essence (cf. VI.9 [9] 1).

Now, Gerson suggests that a thing's unity amounts to its existence not only as conceptually but also as really distinct from that thing's essence, so that what the One gives to everything derived from it is that thing's existence,[31] in the strong sense that the One is not only the origin of existence in things, but also its sustainer (V.3 [49] 15.11–12, 27–30, VI.2 [43] 11.27– 29, VI.5 [23] 12.34–36, VI.7

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[30] Cf. Gerson (1994, 6).

[31] This line of reasoning was hinted by Rist (1973, 83–84) and variously developed by Corrigan (1984; 1999) and Gerson (1990, 185–226, especially 201–212; 1994, 5–14). Common references to the *Enneads* in support of their claim include VI.6 [34] 13.50, VI.7 [38] 2, 21.12–14, 42.11, VI.8 [39] 13.56–57, 20.15–16, 21.32–33, VI.9 [9] 2. For a critique of this position as developed by Gerson (1994), see D. L. Ross (1996).

[38] 23.20–24, 42.11, VI.8 [39] 21.19–21; indirectly, see also II.1 [40] 4.14–25, II.9 [33] 3.1–3, IV.2 [4] 2.42–48, VI.3 [44] 23.1–5, VI.9 [9] 1.40–42).[32]

My contention, which I adapt from Pigler,[33] and which rather than being at variance with Gerson's position tentatively supplements it from the vantage point of our main topic, is that the language of essence and existence can be legitimately transposed in terms of love. More explicitly and by way of anticipation, this means chiefly two things. First, what distinguishes the *eros* that belongs to the One (to which I will refer as *henologic eros*) from the *eros* of everything else is that henologic *eros*, unlike any other manifestation of *eros*, is not directed to something other than itself and so does not entail any lack whatsoever. Thus, just like in the language of being the One is the ground of its own existence, so in the language of love the One is at the same time beloved, love, and love of itself (VI.8 [39] 15.1). Second, what the One gives to everything ultimately derived from it (with the exception of matter, as we shall see) is a fundamental orientation toward the One itself, which as the target of this aim is conceived of as the Good. Thus, just like in the language of being everything receives existence from the One, which alone is simultaneously the Principle of all and *causa sui* (αἴτιον ἑαυτοῦ: VI.8 [39] 14.41; also 7.53, 13.55, 15.8, 16.21, 20.2, 20.21), so in the language of love no thing, whether taken individually or collectively with other things, will ever be the universal object of love, but everything is erotically predisposed toward the One (cf. I.7 [54] 1, I.8 [51] 2.2–4, V.3 [49] 15.10–11),[34] which alone is simultaneously the Good of all and *amor sui* (αὑτοῦ ἔρως: VI.8 [39] 15.1).

If conceived of temporally, the notion of self-causation is obviously contradictory. For let what is caused be existence. Before the One were to bring itself into existence, it would either exist or not exist. If it existed, causation would not occur simply because the One *already* existed; if, instead, it did not exist, causation would still not occur because, in accordance with the Parmenidean adage, *ex nihilo nihil fit*,[35] and so the One will *never* exist. The very same argument can be made if what is caused is love for the One rather than (or together with) existence. Ousager[36] suggests that we can bypass this problem if, instead of translating αἴτιον ἑαυτοῦ as *causa sui*, we rendered it with *ratio sui*, its own reason. Whatever the case may be, it is certainly not in temporal terms that we should understand the expression αἴτιον ἑαυτοῦ, or *causa sui*, when this refers to the One. Instead, I suggest that the One's self-causation, as well as its self-love, may be better clarified from the perspective of its double causality, efficient and final (to which I will return again in what follows). From the perspective of efficient causation, to say that the One is *causa sui* means that it neither receives existence nor is maintained in existence by anything other than itself, while to say that it is *amor sui* means that it neither receives its love nor is maintained in such a loving condition by anything other than itself. Similarly, from the perspective of final causation, for the One to be *causa sui* means precisely that it is *amor sui*, insofar as it seeks nothing beyond itself.[37]

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[32] Cf. Gerson (1994, 10).

[33] Pigler (2002).

[34] At VI.8 [39] 13.12–13 Plotinus even makes the seemingly paradoxical claim that "every being in its desire for the Good wants to be that [Good] rather than what it is" (τῶν ὄντων ἕκαστον ἐφιέμενον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ βούλεται [13] ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον ἢ ὅ ἐστιν εἶναι).

[35] Parmenides, DK 28.B8.5–10; cf. also (Pseudo-) Aristotle, *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* 1.974b12 (in DK 30.A5).

[36] Ousager (2004), 129–137). Important contributions on the concept of αἴτιον ἑαυτοῦ in reference to the One are P. Hadot (1971), Beierwaltes (1999), Narbonne (2001, 98–110; 2011,

I will deal with the self-love of the One directly and more extensively in the next chapter; but before I come to it, I shall briefly turn to the remaining questions I introduced earlier in this section, beginning with that of the ineffability of the One.

2 The Ineffability of the One

The issue of the simplicity of the One goes hand in hand with those of its transcendence and ineffability. From the perspective of someone trying to name it, to be unqualifiedly simple for the One means to lie beyond all multiplicity and to be impervious to all predication. Then we must ask: How can the Principle be conceptualized at all? How can we attribute simplicity to it, if simplicity precludes all distinction? It is because Plotinus is well aware of these problems that he calls the One "truly ineffable" (ἄρρητον τῇ ἀληθείᾳ: V.3 [49] 13.1), and the contact with it, "without speech and without thought" (ἄρρητος καὶ ἀνόητος: V.3 [49] 10.43). And yet, he does not think that speech *about* the One is altogether impossible. On the contrary, he indicates two paths out of silence, a negative one and a positive one.[38]

129–141), and again Ousager (2004, 129–137), where one can find further references to primary and secondary sources on the topic.

[37] The notion of *causa sui* is thus an expression of the transcendence of the One with respect to all that derives from it and seeks it, and the modality of self-causation is the absolute-self positing which Plotinus discusses in VI.8 [39], the treatise on the freedom of the One (cf. Narbonne 2001, 105–106).

[38] Cf. Armstrong (1940, 1–28); Rist (1964, 69–87). A loose parallel of this can be found in Numenius (fr. 2), and especially in Alcinous (*Didaskalikos* X.165.16–34), who speaks of three ways of conceiving (νόησις) God: negation or abstraction (ἀπόφασις: negative utterances in my exposition in the main text), analogy (ἀναλογία: the *via positiva* in the main text) and eminence (ὑπεροχή: superlatives and expressions of transcendence in my account); cf. Rist (1964, 87–88 note 129). See also Meijer (1992, 181–192).

Let us begin with the so-called *via negativa*. The constant use of the language of negation makes of Plotinus a forerunner of negative theology. Thus, we find numerous passages in the *Enneads* where the One is said *not* to be a number of things; for instance: neither being, nor substance, nor life (iii.8 [30] 10.30–31: μὴ ὄντος, μὴ οὐσίας, μὴ ζωῆς), ungenerated (v.4 [7] 1.19: ἀγένητος; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 245d1), incorporeal (v.4 [7] 1.19: μὴ σωματική; cf. vi.9 [9] 5.1–5), without form (v.5 [32] 6.4: ἀνείδεον; cf. vi.7 [38] 17.36, 28.28, 32.9, 33.37, vi.9 [9] 3.4, 43), without activity (v.6 [24] 6.3: ἀνενέργητον), needing nothing (vi.9 [9] 6.35: ἀνενδεὲς ἁπάντων; cf. vi.9 [9] 6.17–18, 23–24), and so on. Plotinus explains the dynamic of negation in several passages (e.g., v.3 [49] 14.5–19, vi.9 [9] 3.49–54, 5.34). At v.3 [49] 14.5–8 he tellingly writes:[39]

> But we have it [i.e., the One] in such a way that we speak about it but we do not speak it. For we say what it is not, but we do not say what it is: so that we speak about it from what comes after it. But we are not prevented from having it, even if we do not speak it.

From this we gather that our language about the One does not express the Principle straightforwardly, but rather indicates it in a roundabout way by our making signs to ourselves (ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς σημαίνειν: v.3 [49] 13.5), as it were. However, in the context of negation, apophatic utterances about the One should not be understood as indications of a mere lack, but, as Wallis remarks, as "denials of everything inconsistent with the One's excellence, in particular of all plurality and all limitation."[40] Plotinus makes this point explicitly at v.5 [32] 6.26–30:[41]

> But perhaps this name 'One' contains [only] a denial of multiplicity. This is why the Pythagoreans symbolically indicated it to each other by the name of Apollo, in negation of the multiple. But if the One—name and

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[39] v.3 [49] 14.5–8: Ἀλλ᾽ οὕτως ἔχομεν, ὥστε περὶ αὐτοῦ μὲν [6] λέγειν, αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ λέγειν. Καὶ γὰρ λέγομεν ὃ μὴ ἔστιν· [7] ὃ δέ ἐστιν, οὐ λέγομεν· ὥστε ἐκ τῶν ὕστερον περὶ αὐτοῦ [8] λέγομεν. Ἔχειν δὲ οὐ κωλυόμεθα, κἂν μὴ λέγωμεν.

[40] Wallis (1995, 57).

[41] v.5 [32] 6.26–30: Τάχα δὲ καὶ τὸ "ἓν" ὄνομα τοῦτο ἄρσιν ἔχει πρὸς τὰ πολλά. [27] Ὅθεν καὶ Ἀπόλλωνα οἱ Πυθαγορικοὶ συμβολικῶς πρὸς [28] ἀλλήλους ἐσήμαινον ἀποφάσει τῶν πολλῶν. Εἰ δὲ θέσις [29] τις τὸ ἕν, τό τε ὄνομα τό τε δηλούμενον, ἀσαφέστερον [30] ἂν γίνοιτο τοῦ εἰ μή τις ὄνομα ἔλεγεν αὐτοῦ. See also the lines that follow this passage, v.5 [32] 6.30–37. On the etymology of "Apollo" given at lines 27–28, cf. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 75 (= *Moralia* v.26.381f).

> reality expressed—was to be taken positively, it would be less clear than if we did not give it a name at all.

Thus, we should not think that the One does not possess faculties which are found at lower levels of unity, including intellection (νοεῖν: III.9 [13] 9, V.3 [49] 11 and especially 13, V.6 [24] 6.29–35, VI.7 [38] 37.24–29, VI.9 [9] 6.43–45), because it *lacks* them, but rather because it does *not need* them (V.6 [24] 5.1–5, VI.7 [38] 37.29–31 and chapter 41; cf. also IV.4 [28] 24.1–12 and VI.7 [38] 9.38–46, where similar points are made about soul and Intellect respectively). Faculties such as the senses, the ability to deliberate, and even intellection, are powers which are certainly useful in their fields of application, but they are also indications of a lack. The case of deliberation aptly illustrates the point. We are capable of deliberation because we possess reason, but we engage in deliberation because the best course of action is not immediately available to us, and so we *need* to deliberate about it. The One, by contrast, has no need for this, for it is always in the best possible condition.

Similarly, and most importantly, when, on the basis of Plato's *Republic* VI.509b9, the One is said to be "beyond being" (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας),[42] the point is not that the One is non-existent. In fact, in apparent opposition to this, at I.7 [54] 1.8 the One is said to be the best of beings (ἄριστον ὂν τῶν ὄντων); and at III.8 [30] 10.26–35 Plotinus clearly argues that the One, although it is none of the things of which it is the origin and although nothing can be strictly predicated of it, is *not* nothing. Therefore, the Plotinian "beyond being" is neither absolute nothingness nor an "otherwise than being," but rather what one may call an excess of being, or, in a fitting expression which I borrow from J.-M. Narbonne,[43] "being otherwise" (i.e., otherwise than the Being taken in its technical acceptation, namely, Intellect: cf. V.5 [32] 6). Therefore, a certain continuity can be maintained between the One and beings, since negative descriptions of the One indicate utter superiority, or excellence, rather than mere privation.

It will be asked how it is possible to refer to the One as both "beyond being" (insofar as it is like nothing that is found in Intellect or at lower ontological levels) and "being otherwise" (insofar as it is not altogether non-existent). I think the answer to this question depends on what facet of the problem one wishes to emphasize. If what is at stake is the affirmation of the One's transcendence, then the Platonic formula of the "beyond" (ἐπέκεινα, ὑπέρ) is employed. If, by contrast, what is at stake is the affirmation of the One's existence, then the expression "being otherwise" may be safely applied to it. However, we should be mindful that what each expression amounts to is an emphasis on a different facet of the same problem, and that one expression does not immediately efface the other. I maintain that for Plotinus it would be equally mistaken to claim, on the one hand, that the One is non-existent on the ground that it is said to be "beyond being" and, on the other, that the One is a part *of* or *in* the totality of beings because it is occasionally said *to be*. Thus, both "beyond" and "otherwise" indicate a radical difference of status rather than a brute negation. According to Plotinus' interpretation of *Republic* VI.509b9, where the Good is said to be beyond being (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας), to be beyond οὐσία does not mean to lack all existence altogether, as a contemporary of Plotinus, the pagan Origen (cf. VP 3.29), seems to have thought (cf. Proclus, *Platonic Theology* II.4.31.8–21, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* VI.1065.2–4).[44] It rather means to "be" beyond the realm designated by οὐσία in its technical acceptation, that is, Intellect (νοῦς): again, a radical difference of status rather than a brute negation.

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[42] The ἐπέκεινα of *Republic* 509b9 is cited or alluded to several times in the *Enneads*: see the *Index Fontium* of HS$_1$ and HS$_2$ under Plato, *Republic* 509b.

[43] See Narbonne (2006a, 62 and passim), who mutuates the expression from Levinas (1981, 7) as he discusses Levinas' appropriation of the Greek philosophical tradition.

In this sense, the language of negation already points to the language of eminence (or of the highest degree of perfection), testified by Plotinus' abundant use of superlatives[45] and of expressions indicating transcendence, such as ὑπέρ ("above")[46] and ἐπέκεινα ("beyond").[47] While it may be easy to see why expressions of transcendence should belong under the path of negation, we might be tempted to conceive of superlatives as closer to affirmations. Contrary to this, I believe that it is safer to keep both under the heading of negation insofar as the degree of perfection expressed by superlatives in this context is one which, while occurring in the form of affirmative linguistic descriptions, points beyond the field of description altogether, toward an experience that lies not only beyond the dianoetic realm, but also beyond the noetic.

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[44] For discussions of Plato's ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας in relation to some of its Middle-Platonic and Neoplatonic interpretations, see Whittaker (1969), Baltes (1997).

[45] E.g., ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15; αἰτιώτατον: VI.8 [39] 18.38; ἀκρότατον: III.9 [13] 9.5; ἁπλούστατον: II.9 [33] 1.8, III.8 [30] 9.17, V.3 [49] 13.34, VI.8 [39] 14.15; ἄριστον: VI.7 [38] 33.14; αὐταρκέστατον, ἱκανώτατον, and ἀνενδεέστατον: VI.9 [9] 6.17–18 and 24; δυνατώτατον and μέγιστον [...] δυνάμει: V.4 [7] 1.25 and VI.9 [9] 6.7–8; ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; καθαρώτατον: VI.9 [9] 3.26; μάλιστα: VI.8 [39] 16.19; τελειότατον: V.1 [10] 6.40, VI.8 [39] 20.14; ὑπέρτατον: IV.2 [4] 2.54, VI.8 [39] 16.9.

[46] E.g., ὑπεράγαθον: VI.9 [9] 6.40; ὑπεράνω: VI.8 [39] 21.30; ὑπερβολή: VI.8 [39] 10.33; ὑπέρκαλον: I.8 [51] 2.8, VI.7 [38] 33.20 (cf. I.6 [1] 9.37–43); ὑπερνόησις: VI.8 [39] 16.32; ὑπερόντως: VI.8 [39] 14.42; ὑπερερρύη and ὑπερπλῆρες: V.2 [11] 1.8–9; ἐνέργεια ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν καὶ ζωήν: VI.8 [39] 16.35–36 (line 34 has ἐπέκεινα in place of ὑπέρ; cf. III.8 [30] 10.3).

[47] E.g., ἐπέκεινα τῶν ἀρίστων βασιλεύων ἐν τῷ νοητῷ: I.8 [51] 2.8–9; αὐτὸ οὐκ ὂν οὐσία, ἀλλ' ἐπέκεινα ταύτης καὶ ἐπέκεινα αὐταρκείας: V.3 [49] 17.13–14; τὸ δὲ ἐπέκεινα αἴτιον: I.4 [46] 4.19; ἄριστον ὂν τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄντων: I.7 [54] 1.8–9; τὸ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ὄντος: I.3 [20] 5.7–8; ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας, ἐπέκεινα καὶ ἐνεργείας καὶ ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ νοήσεως: I.7 [54] 1.19–20 (cf. III.8 [10] 9.9–10, III.9 [13] 9.1, 12, V.1 [10] 8.7–8, 10.2, V.3 [49] 11.1–2, 28, 12.47–48, 13.2–3, V.4 [7] 1.10, 2.39–43, V.5 [32] 6.11 and 20, V.6 [24] 6.30, V.8 [31] 1.3–4, V.9 [5] 2.24, VI.2 [43] 17.22–23, VI.6 [34] 5.37, VI.7 [38] 24.19–20, 40.26–27, VI.8 [39] 9.28, 12.1–2, 19.13, VI.9 [9] 11.42); ἐπέκεινα ἁπάντων: V.1 [10] 6.13 (cf. VI.2 [43] 3).

As for the *via positiva*, it takes the form of the language of analogy, whereby Plotinus attempts to give positive, though metaphorical, descriptions of the One on the basis of what derives from it (cf. V.3 [49] 14.7–8, VI.9 [9] 3.49–54). This means that the kind of analogy Plotinus is likely to have in mind is not one of proper proportionality but, as Gerson remarks, one "of proportion where the cause is denominated from its effects."[48] Thus, the One is variously called or said to have will (βούλησις: VI.8 [39] 13.56), activity (ἐνεργεία: VI.8 [39] 7.47, 51, 16.15, 35, 20.9), life (ζωή: VI.8 [39] 7.51), thinking (κατανόησις, νόησις: V.4 [7] 2.17, 18) and self-consciousness (συναίσθησις: V.4 [7] 2.18), substance (οὐσία: VI.8 [39] 7.52, 20.10), existence (ὑπόστασις: VI.8 [39] 7.47, 20.11), and so on, not in the sense that it is identical with any of these things spoken of ordinarily, but in the sense that its nature has (or rather, *is*) the power to bring about all such things as effects while itself remaining that very power. To cite Gerson again, "the One is virtually what everything else is actually" (cf. V.3 [49] 15.27–33, V.5 [32] 9.1–11).[49] But the power of the One should not be confused with the indetermination of Aristotelian matter, which by itself is potentially any given thing without actually being any one of them (e.g., Aristotle, *De anima* II.1.412a4–6, 9, *Metaphysics* VIII.1.1042a27–28, 2.1042b9–10). All things are in the One neither actually nor potentially, but rather eminently, as in a source from which they spring purely in virtue of its power.[50]

Thus, it should not come as a surprise that several of the metaphors used by Plotinus to offer us a glimpse into the nature of the One, if only in relation to its effects, denote entities which, as causes, contain their effects virtually. Chief among these metaphors are the ones of the spring, or source (πηγή: see particularly III.8 [30] 10; cf. VI.9 [9] 9.2, 11.31),[51] and of the root of a tree (III.8 [30] 10; cf. VI.8 [39] 15.33–36, VI.9 [9] 9.2).Other metaphors include fire, snow, and an odorous substance (V.1 [10] 6.34–37, V.4 [7] 2.30–33),[52] the center of a circle or a series of circles (I.7 [54] 1.23–24, IV.1 [21] 1.16–17, IV.4 [28] 16.23–30, V.1 [10] 11.10–12, VI.5 [23] 5, VI.8 [39] 18.7–32),[53] light or the sun (I.7 [54] 1.24–28, IV.3 [27] 17, V.1 [10] 6.28–30, VI.8 [39] 18.32–36), and love (VI.8 [39] 15.1, 16.12–14, two passages to which I will return in the next chapter).

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[48] Gerson (1990, 213).

[49] Gerson (1990, 214).

[50] See Moreau (1970, 82); cf. also Pigler (2002, 58).

[51] The One is called source of a number of things, for instance: beauty (I.6 [1] 6.15–16, 9.41–42), acts according to nature (I.7 [54] 1.15–16), Intellect (II.5 [25] 3.40, VI.9 [9] 9.2), Soul (II.5 [25] 3.40, VI.9 [9] 9.2), cause and being (VI.8 [39] 14.29–32, VI.9 [9] 9.2), goodness (VI.9 [9] 9.2), the best things (VI.9 [9] 5.36), life (VI.9 [9] 9.1).

It is hard to overemphasize that these descriptions are metaphorical, hence the sustained use of such qualifiers as οἷον[54] and ὥσπερ[55] ("as if," "so to speak," "like," "nearly"). Thus, at VI.8 [39] 13.47–50[56] Plotinus tells us that "one must go along with the words, if one in speaking of that [Good] uses of necessity to indicate it expressions which we do not strictly speaking allow to be used; but one should understand 'as if' *with each of them*" (my emphasis; cf. also V.5 [32] 6.22). In fact, even such a common title as "the Good" does not really name the One, but only a perspective *on* it, to wit, the perspective of the whole of reality desiring it. Therefore, in a strict sense not even goodness is predicated of the One (II.9 [33] 1.5–8, V.3 [49] 11.23–25, VI.7 [38] 24.13–16, 41.28–31, VI.9 [9] 6.39–42, 55–57). It follows that attributes normally associated with the Good (e.g., self-sufficiency) are also not strictly predicated of the One (see V.3 [49] 17.12–14). What is said about the One is not categorially predicated of it but is inferred from what comes after it. In fact, all strict categorial predication, including the appellative "Principle," fails in the discourse about the One. More radically still, as I already pointed out in the previous section, in a strict sense even to say that it is "One" is not a precise statement about its nature taken in itself, but only an indication that in it there is no multiplicity (V.5 [32] 6.26–37). As Meijer puts it: " 'To speak about it (περὶ αὐτοῦ)' is not to speak categorially about the nature of the One but rather about its relations with what follows,"[57] from which then it seems possible to draw some tentative conclusions about it. Accordingly, when, following Plotinus' own lead, I repeatedly state that the One is unqualifiedly or absolutely simple and then refer to it as, for example, a simple power or a simple erotic self-identity, "power" and "erotic self-identity" should not be understood as qualifications of the One taken in itself, but attempts to put its unqualified simplicity into words from our limited standpoint.

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[52] On fire see further IV.3 [27] 10.30–31, V.1 [10] 3.10, V.3 [49] 7.23–25, V.4 [7] 1.31. On snow see V.4 [7] 1.31. The example of the odorous substance does not seem to occur elsewhere in the *Enneads* in reference to the One; it is found referred to Intellect at VI.7 [38] 12.23–30, where all the senses are brought together to describe the life pouring forth from Intellect.

[53] As ARMSTRONG (V, 50–51 note 1) rightly observes, the metaphor of the circle "can be used at any level of the hierarchy to describe the combination of immanent presence and transcendent separateness which Plotinus sees when he is trying to describe the relationship of a relatively complex and multiple derived reality to its simpler and more unified source" (cf., e.g., IV.2 [4] 1.24–29). A similar point can be made about the images of light and the sun (e.g., III.5 [50] 2.31–32, IV.3 [27] 11.14–17, IV.5 [29] 7) and of love.

[54] To limit my references to the passages just cited in the previous paragraph and their immediate context, see: III.8 [30] 10.4, 9, 11, 29, IV.3 [27] 17.12, IV.4 [28] 16.21, V.1 [10] 6.12–13, 29, 33, 45, VI.8 [39] 13.50, 15.5–6, 16.12–13, 19–21, 24 and 31, 18.4 and passim. Cf. Beierwaltes (1999, 223–225) for some observations.

[55] Once again, to limit my references to the passages just quoted in the previous paragraph and their immediate context: III.8 [30] 10.4, IV.3 [27] 17.22, V.1 [10] 6.29, 45, 7.4, 31, VI.8 [39] 15.34, 18.33.

[56] VI.8 [39] 13.47–50: Δεῖ δὲ συγχωρεῖν τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, εἴ τις [48] περὶ ἐκείνου λέγων ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐνδείξεως ἕνεκα αὐτοῖς [49] χρῆται, ἃ ἀκριβείᾳ οὐκ ἐῶμεν λέγεσθαι· λαμβανέτω δὲ καὶ [50] τὸ οἷον ἐφ᾽ ἑκάστου.

The array of analogies by which Plotinus attempts to express the unqualifiedly simple nature of the One through positive descriptions does not only constitute a path out silence, but also begins to throw some light on a question closely connected with the thesis that everything derives from an absolutely simple single source, namely: How can the many spring from the One? In other words, in what way can something unqualifiedly simple give rise to multiplicity? Plotinus' answer to this question is his original Principle of Double Activity, a principle which is very often cast in the metaphorical language (and through some of the very same metaphors) introduced in this section.

3 Modality of the Derivation of the Many from the One: The Principle of Double Activity

Very generally, the Principle of Double Activity states that in Plotinus' universe everything (with the exception of lower matter, which I will discuss in the next chapter) operates in accordance with a twofold activity: an activity proper to (or identical with) the essence of each thing (i.e., a primary or internal activity, more technically referred to as activity of the essence), and an activity that derives from it (i.e., a secondary or external activity, more technically referred to as activity from the essence). The principle is found most frequently in Plotinus' account of the emergence of a hypostasis from another. I will begin by citing two passages in which the Principle of Double Activity is put forth explicitly, V.4 [7] 2.26–37 and V.1 [10] 6.25–39.[58] The first passage, V.4 [7] 2.26–37, reads:[59]

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[57] Meijer (1992, 184).

> But how, when that [viz., the One] abides unchanged, does [Intellect] come into being? For each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to the essence and one which goes out from the essence; and that which belongs to the essence is the actuality which each thing is, while the other activity derives from the first one, which must in everything follow it of necessity, being different from the thing itself: as in fire there is a heat which is the fullness of its essence, and another which comes into being from that [primary heat] when [fire] exercises the [activity] which is connatural to its substance in abiding unchanged as fire. So it is also in the higher world; and much more so there, while the Principle abides in its own proper way of life, the activity generated from the perfection in it, that is, from its coexistent activity acquires substantial existence, since it comes from a great power, the greatest indeed of all…

And here is the second passage particularly deserving of attention, V.1 [10] 6.25–39:[60]

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[58] Other important, more or less explicit references to the Principle of Double Activity include: II.9 [33] 3.11–12, 8.22–23, III.2 [47] 4.13–16, III.5 [50] 3.3–5, III.8 [30] 5.14–17, IV.3 [27] 10.31–41, IV.5 [29] 6.23–31, 7.13–20 and 49–51, IV.8 [6] 6.6–15, V.1 [10] 3.6–10, V.2 [11] 1, V.3 [49] 7.19–25, VI.2 [43] 22.26–33, VI.8 [39] 18.46–52. Rutten (1956) calls this principle "doctrine des deux actes." I follow Igal (1982–1998, I, 28–29), who calls it "principio de la doble actividad." Useful treatments of this doctrine are found in Covotti (1935, 134–141), Rutten (1956), Rist (1967, 69–73), Lloyd (1987, 167–170; 1990, 98–105), Gerson (1994, 22–35), Narbonne (2001, 61–79), Emilsson (2007, 22–68; 2017, 48–57), Chiaradonna (2009, 74–79).

[59] V.4 [7] 2.26–37: Ἀλλὰ πῶς μένοντος ἐκείνου [27] γίνεται; Ἐνέργεια ἡ μέν ἐστι τῆς οὐσίας, ἡ δ' ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας [28] ἑκάστου· καὶ ἡ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας αὐτό ἐστιν ἐνέργεια [29] ἕκαστον, ἡ δὲ ἀπ' ἐκείνης, ἣν δεῖ παντὶ ἕπεσθαι ἐξ ἀνάγκης [30] ἑτέραν οὖσαν αὐτοῦ· οἷον καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρὸς ἡ μέν τίς ἐστι συμπληροῦσα [31] τὴν οὐσίαν θερμότης, ἡ δὲ ἀπ' ἐκείνης ἤδη γινομένη [32] ἐνεργοῦντος ἐκείνου τὴν σύμφυτον τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἐν τῷ [33] μένειν πῦρ. Οὕτω δὴ κἀκεῖ· καὶ πολὺ πρότερον ἐκεῖ μένοντος [34] αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ οἰκείῳ ἤθει ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ τελειότητος [35] καὶ συνούσης ἐνεργείας ἡ γεννηθεῖσα ἐνέργεια ὑπόστασιν [36] λαβοῦσα, ἅτε ἐκ μεγάλης δυνάμεως, μεγίστης μὲν [37] οὖν ἁπασῶν… I take the καὶ at line 35 to be epexegetic. The translation is ARMSTRONG'S, slightly modified.

[60] V.1 [10] 6.25–39: Δεῖ οὖν ἀκινήτου ὄντος, [26] εἴ τι δεύτερον μετ' αὐτό, οὐ προσνεύσαντος οὐδὲ βουληθέντος [27] οὐδὲ ὅλως κινηθέντος ὑποστῆναι αὐτό. Πῶς οὖν καὶ [28] τί δεῖ νοῆσαι περὶ ἐκεῖνο μένον; Περίλαμψιν ἐξ αὐτοῦ μέν, [29] ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ μένοντος, οἷον ἡλίου τὸ περὶ αὐτὸ λαμπρὸν ὥσπερ [30] περιθέον, ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀεὶ γεννώμενον μένοντος. Καὶ πάντα [31] τὰ ὄντα, ἕως μένει, ἐκ τῆς αὐτῶν οὐσίας ἀναγκαίαν τὴν περὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς [32] τὸ ἔξω αὐτῶν ἐκ τῆς παρούσης δυνάμεως δίδωσιν αὐτῶν [33] ἐξηρτημένην ὑπόστασιν, εἰκόνα οὖσαν οἷον [34] ἀρχετύπων ὧν

> So, if there is a second after the One it must have come to be without the One moving at all, without any inclination or act of will or any sort of activity on its part. How did this happen then, and what are we to think of as surrounding the One in its repose? [It must be] a radiation from it while it remains unchanged, like the bright light of the sun which, so to speak, runs round it, springing from it continually while it remains unchanged. And all beings, as long as they remain in being, necessarily give out from their own essences, in dependence on their present power, a surrounding reality directed to what is outside them, a kind of image of the archetypes from which it was produced: fire [produces] the heat which comes from it; snow too does not merely keep its cold inside itself; and perfumed things show this particularly clearly: as long as they exist, something is diffused from themselves around them which is enjoyed by what is near them. And all things, when they come to perfection, produce: what is always perfect produces always and everlastingly; and it produces something less than itself.

Four observations on these two passages should suffice to outline the essentials of the Principle of Double Activity,[61] the two activities being the activity of the essence or of the substance (ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας), and the activity from the essence or from the substance (ἐνέργεια ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας).[62] The first, and somewhat more laborious, observation concerns some of the possible lexical and conceptual sources of the principle, most notably Aristotle, Stoicism, and Plato. Taken singly, I think that none of these sources is sufficient fully to

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ἐξέφυ πῦρ μὲν τὴν παρ' αὐτοῦ θερμότητα· [35] καὶ χιὼν οὐκ εἴσω μόνον τὸ ψυχρὸν κατέχει· μάλιστα δὲ [36] ὅσα εὐώδη μαρτυρεῖ τοῦτο· ἕως γάρ ἐστι, πρόεισί τι ἐξ αὐτῶν [37] περὶ αὐτά, ὧν ἀπολαύει ὑποστάντων ὁ πλησίον. Καὶ [38] πάντα δὲ ὅσα ἤδη τέλεια γεννᾷ· τὸ δὲ ἀεὶ τέλειον ἀεὶ καὶ ἀίδιον [39] γεννᾷ· καὶ ἔλαττον δὲ ἑαυτοῦ γεννᾷ. ARMSTRONG'S translation, minimally modified.

[61] The expression "double activity" is explicitly found at II.9 [33] 8.22 (ἐνέργειαν [...] διττήν) and in the plural at VI.2 [43] 22.29 (ἐνέργειαι διτταί).

[62] The two expressions, ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας and ἐνέργεια ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας, have been rendered in various ways: for example, as "actividad inmanente" and "liberada" (Igal 1982–1998, I, 28), as "primary and secondary activity" (e.g., Gerson 1994, 22–35) or "first and second activity" (e.g., in Chapters 6, 11, and 12 of Majumdar 2007), and as "internal and external activity (or act)" (e.g., in the first chapter of Emilsson 2007). This is acceptable as long as we maintain that "secondary" does not mean accidental or unnecessary (much like Igal's "actividad liberada" does not mean that the "actividad inmanente" is "forced" or "coerced"), and as long as we stay clear of spatial connotations (which one might wrongly infer from Emilsson's "internal and external activity").

account for the principle, but taken together, they may give us an adequate picture of what Plotinus might have wished to accomplish with it.

Some scholars variously indicate Aristotle as the primary source of the Principle of Double Activity.[63] Particularly from a lexical standpoint, it does not seem unreasonable to view Aristotle's notion of ἐνέργεια as a plausible source. The term is usually translated with "actuality," and to my knowledge it does not occur in Plato, hence its probable Aristotelian derivation in Plotinus. The basic meaning of ἐνέργεια in Aristotle is that of being engaged in a given work, or activity,[64] as opposed to merely having the potentiality for, or being in potency (δύναμις) to, it (e.g., *De interpretatione* 9.19a9, 13.23a6– 11, *Physics* III.1.201a9–15, *Metaphysics* IX.6.1048a25–b6). But Aristotle also distinguishes between first actuality (which is sometimes a ἕξις, or habitual disposition) and second actuality (which is usually indicated by the term ἐντελέχεια), as when someone knows Greek but is not speaking it at the moment (first actuality), in contrast with someone who knows it and is presently speaking it (second actuality)—(e.g., *De anima* II.1.412a22–28, 5.417a21–b2; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.1098a5–7). Now, first actuality (in our example, the ability to speak Greek whenever one wishes if nothing external prevents it) is in fact also a kind of potentiality, a relatively permanent state to be distinguished from the more basic potentiality of someone who, being of the appropriate sort of genus and matter (τὸ γένος τοιοῦτον καὶ ἡ ὕλη: *De anima* II.5.417a27), is in the position of being able to *learn* to perform a given activity (in our example, to speak Greek) but has not learned it (yet).

As we ask how these distinctions apply to the Aristotelian God, and whether they could be transposed to the Plotinian One as the single origin of all things, we will soon realize that while their application to the First Mover fits the Aristotelian framework quite well, their transposition to the One reveals that the identification of the source of the Principle of Double Activity with Aristotle is at least inconclusive. Admittedly, the actuality of the Aristotelian First Mover, that is, the activity of self-thinking, ought to be of the second (Aristotelian) kind, and permanently so (see *Metaphysics* XII.6.1071b19–22, 7.1072a23–26). If one concedes Aristotle's reasoning in *Metaphysics* XII, this is not too difficult to maintain. Through its activity, the Aristotelian God sustains the permanent motion of the heavens not directly, but by its being their final cause, or the highest object of love.[65] In Chapter 4 we will see that, in spite of some important differences, this is also the case for the Plotinian One, which in the *Enneads* is called the "most loved" (ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15). But unlike Aristotle's First Mover, whose activity is wholly self-contained and whose causality is strictly final, the One appears to have both a double activity and a double causality. The two causalities in question are final and efficient (a topic to which I will return). As for its double activity, the One (in fact, every being whatsoever in Plotinus' universe except matter) is said to possess an ἐνέργεια which, much like that of the Aristotelian God, is self-contained, and another which, unlike that of the First Mover, proceeds of necessity from the One as something other than the One in accordance with the Principle of Double Activity.

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[63] E.g., Rutten (1956), Lloyd (1990, 98–105); see also Ferrari (2002), for whom both Aristotle's discussion of causality in *Metaphysics* II.1.993b19–31 (on the basis of Szlezák 1979, 59–60 and 159 note 524) and Plato's discussion of the Good in *Republic* VI–VII are indispensable to understand Plotinus' views on double activity.

[64] The spectrum of activity is rather wide, ranging from, say, a person's ordinary walking (*De interpretatione* 13.23a6–11, *Physics* V.4.228a12–17, *Generation of Animals* II.3.736b22–24) to the eternal unhindered thinking and life of the First Mover (*Metaphysics* XII.6.1071b19–20, 7.1072b26–28).

As Gerson argues, the Aristotelian God cannot be active outside of itself because this would introduce "a wedge between what the principle is in itself and what it does outside itself. Such a wedge would require that the former be in potency to the latter."[66] When Plotinus combines the distinction of actuality and potentiality and that of first and second actuality, he does not introduce potentiality in the One, for the One's second activity is not something that takes place *within* the One, nor is it something added *to it*, but is an activity which, while springing of necessity from the One, gives rise to something that is not identical with it. For this reason the One is said to possess not only final, but also efficient causality: it is desired by everything (final causality) and is the transcendent source of all things (efficient causality). The First Mover, by contrast, cannot be an efficient cause because its causality is never directed outwards and does not produce something other than itself;[67] in Plotinian language: it lacks the activity *from* the essence.

It follows that while from a lexical point of view the Aristotelian derivation of the Principle of Double Activity may seem probable, conceptually no strict parallel can be drawn between Aristotle's two actualities and Plotinus' two activities. This is so both because Aristotle's first actuality is a kind of potentiality, whereas there is nothing potential in the Aristotelian sense in either activity of the One, and because of the difference in causal activity between the Aristotelian First Mover and the Plotinian One.

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[65] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072a26–b3; 1072b2–3 in particular: "the final cause [...] moves by being an object of love" (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα [...] κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον). Cf. *De anima* III.10.433a27–29.

[66] Gerson (1994, 23).

[67] Cf. Lloyd (1976, 147–148), Gerson (1994, 24), Bussanich (1999, 48).

Two objections may be raised. First, Plotinus himself refers to the One with the term δύναμις, as when he calls it the "power of all things" (δύναμις πάντων: v.4 [7] 2.38[68]), or a power that is "unspeakable" (ἀφάτου: iv.8 [6] 6.11), "infinitely great" (ἀμήχανος: v.3 [49] 16.2[69]), "endless in depth" (βυσσόθεν ἄπειρον: vi.5 [23] 12.5[70]), and "standing on its own" (ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς βεβῶσαν: vi.6 [34] 8.10–11). Secondly, in Aristotle the first actuality is sometimes equated with "habit" (ἕξις[71]), a notion that would seem less fraught with the danger of introducing potentiality in the Principle, and so, after all, adequate to serve as the background of the Principle of Double Activity.

Neither objection stands, however. In the first place, the notion of δύναμις at work in the expressions from the *Enneads* I just quoted is not the Aristotelian one of potentiality and (temporary) lack of actualization. In fact, Plotinus completely bans δύναμις understood as potentiality from the One (as does Aristotle from the First Mover) and reverts to what seems to have been a more basic meaning of the term, namely power, which in its application to the One comes to signify, more precisely, *infinity* of power (see particularly vi.9 [9] 6 and vi.5 [23] 11; cf. v.5 [32] 6.14–15: ἄπλετον φύσιν; v.5 [32] 10.21–22: Τὸ δ' ἄπειρον ᾗ δύναμις ἔχει).[72] Aristotle himself was well aware of the different meanings of the term δύναμις as he used it to introduce the concept of potentiality or lack of actualization as distinguised from δύναμις as active power or principle of action (cf. *Metaphysics* v.12.1019a15–20, ix.1.1045b35–36, 1046a26–28, 6.1048b25). Thus, Rutten thinks that it is precisely this more basic sense of δύναμις—δύναμις as active power—which is at the root of Plotinus' own distinction between ἐνέργεια as the actuality of a thing which is identical with the thing's form, and ἐνέργεια in a more proper sense.[73] In Plotinus' own words at *Enneads* II.5. [25] 2.31–32: "we might also apply the term 'actuality' [ἐνέργειαν] more properly [κυριώτερον] to something else, the actuality [ἐνέργειαν] contrasted with the potentiality [τῇ δυνάμει] that brings it to the thing."[74] From this Rutten concludes that "le rapport de l' « acte de l'essence » à l' « acte qui résulte de l'essence » est-il celui d'une puissance productrice à l'acte qu'elle produit."[75] While this is true, Rutten's forumulation may give the impression that this power is an activity—the activity of the essence—only in relation to its product, and thus still somehow a power in the sense of potentiality. For although derivation is an a-temporal and necessary event, one might conjecture that at least conceptually, if we were to abstract from the derived product (the activity from the essence), the producing power would be inactive, and as such a mere potency. But this is not the case: the simple fact that δύναμις here qualifies, not any condition whatsoever, but an ἐνέργεια,[76] should prevent us from entertaining this kind of conjecture. According to Plotinus, the power of the One (and indeed that of each hypostasis) is a self-abiding activity that is identical with its very being, regardless of what comes after it. It is a power which is, in this precise sense, an index of both the transcendence of the One (insofar as the One is self-abiding) and of its immanence (insofar as it is present to its products). Now, this concept of power is also the ground of a crucial difference between Aristotle and Plotinus.[77] For although both think that the activity which proceeds from an active power depends on this power, for Aristotle the two activities are different only conceptually, but numerically they are identical (e.g., the activity of a mover and that of the thing moved by it at *Physics* III.3.202a13–21, or the activity of a teacher and that of the one learning what is being taught at *Physics* III.3.202b6–8). For Plotinus, by contrast, the two activities are *really* distinct (though not chronologically). This means that the activity *from* the essence is not merely the activity *of* the essence conceptualized from the perspective of derived reality; rather, it is a new activity, an altogether new thing, even if one that constantly depends on the activity from which it proceeds.

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[68] On the One as δύναμις πάντων see further iii.8 [30] 10.1, v.1 [10] 7.9–10, v.3 [49] 15.32–33, v.4 [7] 1.36; in several other places the One is variously qualified in terms of δύναμις: see v.5 [32] 5.23, 10.21–22, 12.38–39, vi.7 [38] 32.31, vi.8 [39] 9.45, vi.9 [9] 5.36–37, 6.7–8.

[69] On ἀμήχανος as meaning "infinitely great," see Sleeman and Pollet (1980, s.v.); cf. Liddell and Scott (1996, s.v., ii.3).

[70] On the power of the One as boundless or infinite (ἄπειρον) see v.5 [32] 10.21–22, 11.1–5, vi.5 [23] 4.13–14. The power of the One is ἄπειρον, however, not in the pejorative sense of something imperfect and scattered, as in the case of lower matter (see Section 4 of the next chapter), but in the sense that the One is that which imparts form and determination while itself remaining beyond all form and determination.

[71] Aristotle, *De anima* ii.1.412a22–28 (where at line 26 the word used is ἔχειν, the verbal cognate of ἕξις), 5.417b9–16; cf. also *Nicomachean Ethics* i.8.1098b33–1099a3 and *Eudemian Ethics* ii.1.1218b35–36, 1219a6.

[72] While Plotinus sometimes uses δύναμις to mean active power, he is obviously well familiar with the ways in which Aristotle uses the term to mean potentiality, or a yet unfulfilled ἐνέργεια, as it is clear from several passages in the *Enneads* (e.g., iii.8 [30] 11.2, v.3 [49] 7.17–18, and especially treatise ii.5 [25]).

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[73] Rutten (1956, 102).

[74] Since the focus of this chapter is the One as the ultimate source of all things, I will only mention in passing that the concept of δύναμις as active power is not restricted to the One but applies to all the hypostases (e.g., to soul at II.1 [40] 4.15 and 6.53, to Intellect at III.6 [26] 6.18 and III.7 [45] 3.8) and to virtually everything in Plotinus' universe (e.g., to the senses at IV.3 [27] 23.3–21, to seeds at IV.9 [8] 3.18 and V.9 [5] 6.11, to boxing at VI.1 [42] 10.16).

[75] Rutten (1956, 103).

[76] Cf. Emilsson (2007, 29–30) for a similar point. Sometimes Plotinus explicitly equates the δύναμις of a thing to what elsewhere he calls its ἐνέργεια, as when he applies the Principle of Double Activity to soul (IV.3 [27] 10.31–41; cf. II.9 [33] 8.22–26, V.1 [10] 6.45).

[77] See Rutten (1956, 104–105); cf. also Lloyd (1990, 99–100).

In short, and as Lloyd points out,[78] "power" was the primary meaning of δύναμις not only before Plotinus, but well before Aristotle. What Aristotle did is to distinguish more sharply and explicitly between two main senses of the term: that of active power and that of possibility (potentiality), with the latter being dependent on the former (see *Metaphysics* v.12.1019a15–b15). Aristotle probably turned to the notion of ἐνέργεια as more apt to express the nature of the Unmoved Mover, from which all potentiality is excluded. When Plotinus applies the concept of δύναμις to the One, he does not reverse the Aristotelian order nor does he merely rename Aristotle's divine ἐνέργεια, but links δύναμις to productive activity. As Lloyd remarks, "Aristotle's ἐνέργεια was complete in itself: Plotinus' δύναμις is always accompanied by a δύναμις or ἐνέργεια ποιητική."[79] This ἐνέργεια ποιητική is neither Aristotelian potentiality, which would imply a lack, nor Aristotelian pure ἐνέργεια, which is not ποιητική at all. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think that these Aristotelian distinctions may have been instrumental to the development of what I have referred to as the Principle of Double Activity. However, they do not seem to suffice to explain certain features of this principle, for what Plotinus does with them goes well beyond Aristotle.

As for the possibility of equating first actuality with ἕξις (the second objection raised above), while it is true that in Aristotle there is a definite tie between the two, this is not sufficiently convincing to establish Aristotelian ἕξις as the forerunner of the Plotinian activity of the essence. We may simply cite P. Hadot's remark on this matter in connection with a discussion of some texts of Marius Victorinus and of Porphyry:[80] "L'*habitus* aristotélicien n'est qu'analogue à l'acte premier [plotinien]. Même si cet acte premier est conçu comme une puissance active, il n'est pas lui-même un *habitus*."[81] It is not, because according to Aristotle a ἕξις, being a first actuality, is a habitual disposition (i.e., a state, which is more stable and longer-lasting than a condition, or διάθεσις) rather than an activity (see *Categories* 8.8b25–9a13; cf. *De anima* ii.5.417a21–b2, *Nicomachean Ethics* ii.5.1105b25–28). As such, it is something whose activation is accidental. Therefore, it cannot be identical with the activity of the essence of any given thing, for this activity constitutes the very being of the thing.

If a conceptual analogue of Plotinian δύναμις, which here stands for the activity of the essence, is to be found, it would lie less in the Aristotelian than in the Stoic notion of ἕξις, for as Hadot again notices, "[l']ἕξις stoïcienne n'est pas, comme son homonyme aristotélicienne, une qualité accidentelle, elle est la nature même de la chose, son être proper, le principe de son activité."[82] Chrysippus, for example, speaks of ἕξις as a principle of both cohesion[83] and specification[84] of any given thing: it is a thing's substantial character from which result certain specific effects external to the thing. Plotinus' Principle of Double Activity seems to presuppose a distinction like the Stoic one between a thing's ἕξις and the effects deriving from it. Unlike Aristotelian δύναμις (and unlike Aristotelian ἕξις which, again, for the most part can be understood as a form of actualization presupposing potentiality), Stoic ἕξις is not possibility or (yet) unachieved actuality, but active power irradiating externally according to the nature of the thing, a power through which the nature of the thing may also become known.

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[78] Lloyd (1955, 146); cf. Souilhé (1919, 1–70), Peters (1967, 42–43).

[79] Lloyd (1955, 147).

[80] P. Hadot (1968, i, 228–230 and 335 note 6).

[81] P. Hadot (1968, i, 228 note 4).

And yet, in spite of the possibility of some Stoic influence on Plotinus, the very language of ἕξις does not seem to sit well with the fact that he frames the Principle of Double Activity in the terminology of ἐνέργεια (and δύναμις). Thus, we seem to have reached an impasse. For if on the one hand Aristotle lends himself as a plausible explanation of the terminology but fails to provide a conceptual analogue of what is at stake in the Principle of Double Activity, the Stoics seem in part to adumbrate the principle conceptually but do not quite supply a convincing terminological parallel.

While I do not think that we have sufficient evidence to provide a definitive solution to the puzzle concerning the sources of the Principle of Double Activity, a tentative one presents itself if we take into account another plausible and, in my view, more likely antecedent of the notion of an active power irradiating externally according to the nature of the thing, one that precedes both the Stoics and Aristotle, namely, Plato. This solution is more attractive than the previous two, I believe, because Plato is generally Plotinus' main source of inspiration (on which see Section 1 of Chapter 3), even when the terminology by which he expresses his views appears to owe much to Aristotle, as it does in the present case. Moreover, this solution suffices to account for the same conceptual territory covered by the Stoic notion of ἕξις.[85] In fact, the notion of an active power irradiating externally according to the nature of the thing is not only already present in Plato, but the term used to indicate it is also one of our main suspects: δύναμις.[86] As Souilhé has showed, the Platonic δύναμις belonging to a thing is both active and passive, for on the one hand it reveals the nature of a given thing by irradiating that thing's peculiar trait outwardly, while on the other it shows that that thing can be acted upon by some things and resist some others. In a word, as Souilhé puts it, δύναμις is for each thing "à la fois principe de connaissance et principe de diversité."[87] Taken in this sense, δύναμις can apply to everything in the Plotinian universe, even to the One, with the important difference that the One's power produces something after itself but excludes all affection (παθεῖν).

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[82] P. Hadot (1968, I, 230). Authors variously subscribing to a Stoic derivation of the Principle of Double Activity include Armstrong (1937), P. Hadot (1968, I, 225–239), Narbonne (2001, 70–79), Aubry (2006, 230–231).

[83] Chrysippus, SVF II.540, 172.1–2: ἕξιν γὰρ ἔχειν τὴν συνέχουσαν αὐτὴν [viz., οὐσίαν] καὶ συντηροῦσαν. Cf. also SVF II.473, 155.29–30; SVF II.477, 157.6–8.

[84] Chrysippus, SVF II.449, 147.38–43; SVF II.612, 187.2–4. In these passages ἕξις as a specifying principle is equated with the substantive quality of each thing and is mentioned in connection with such realities as the hardness of iron, the thickness of stone, the whiteness of silver, and the inner fire of charcoal.

[85] Cf. Emilsson (2007, 54).

The identification of the activity of the essence with δύναμις sketched here seems to be supported explicitly in the second passage cited above as one of the chief statements of the Principle of Double Activity: "And all beings, as long as they remain in being, necessarily give out from their own essences [οὐσίας], in dependence on their present power [παρούσης δυνάμεως], a surrounding reality [ὑπόστασιν] directed to what is outside them…" (v.1 [10] 6.30–33; see note 60 above for the full Greek text). Other texts lend support to this view. At v.4 [7] 1.23–26, for example, the power of the One is closely associated with its perfection: "How then does it [i.e., Intellect] come from the First? If the First is perfect, the most perfect of all, and the primal power, it must be the most powerful of all beings and the other powers must imitate it as far as they are able."[88] Similarly, at v.4 [7] 2.33–37 we read: "while the Principle abides 'in its own proper way of life' the activity [ἐνέργεια] generated from the perfection in it and its coexistent activity acquires substantial existence, since it comes from a great power, the greatest indeed of all…"[89]

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[86] Plato uses the noun δύναμις (and the related verb δύνασθαι) in this acceptation in relation to a number of things, for instance the four elements (*Philebus* 29b8, *Timaeus* 32c8), intelligence (*Philebus* 31a2), the moist or liquid (*Philebus* 32a1), Socrates' famed charm to render the soul healthy (*Charmides* 156b2), soda and other similarly pungent substances (*Timaeus* 66a1), acidity and salinity of blood in rotting vessels (*Timaeus* 82e6), the congealing power of fibers (*Timaeus* 85d6); see also the often quoted *Republic* vi.509b9–10, where the Good is said to be beyond οὐσία by transcending it "in dignity and power" (πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει). In these passages the meaning of δύναμις is clearly not that of Aristotelian potentiality. Cf. Souilhé (1919, 150–152) for further references.

[87] Souilhé (1919, 149). See *Sophist* 247d8–e4, where Plato has the stranger suggest to the materialists "that things that are are nothing but power" (τὰ ὄντα [e4] ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις), and that δύναμις is to be understood as ability to act (ποιεῖν) on something or to be acted upon (παθεῖν), even if minimally, by something (cf. also *Theaetetus* 156a5–7).

[88] v.4 [7] 1.23–26: Πῶς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου; Εἰ [24] τέλεόν ἐστι τὸ πρῶτον καὶ πάντων τελεώτατον καὶ δύναμις [25] ἡ πρώτη, δεῖ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δυνατώτατον εἶναι, [26] καὶ τὰς ἄλλας δυνάμεις καθόσον δύνανται μιμεῖσθαι ἐκεῖνο.

While I take it that these conjectures on the sources of the Principle of Double Activity have been useful to introduce and clarify some of the essential features of the principle, perhaps they have taken us too far afield from its conceptual significance and purpose in Plotinus' metaphysics. Thus we ask: What is Plotinus trying to do by formulating this principle? It seems clear that his main goal is to provide a law that explains the process of derivation of all reality, or how certain effects necessarily follow upon metaphysically superior causes. As a reader of Plato, Plotinus might have thought to have discovered the issue in Plato himself, and naturally turned to the dialogues to find passages that would confirm his intuition. However, a good deal of interpretive work was needed, on Plotinus' part, to find and justify textual support for the Principle of Double Activity in the dialogues. Gerson suggests three Platonic passages that might have served this end: *Republic* VI.509b6–10 (the Form of the Good in the context of the analogy of the sun), *Timaeus* 29e1–3 (demiurgic activity; cf. also *Phaedrus* 247a7), and *Symposium* 206b7–8 and 212a2–7 (the production of beauty).[90] To these texts, we may add *Phaedo* 99d4–102a2 (Ideas as causes, or the so-called second sailing), and, as suggested by Emilsson,[91] *Phaedrus* 245c8–d8 (the self-motion of the soul as the source of all other movement) and *Republic* IV.443c9–d1 (virtue and virtuous action). I think Gerson is right to stress the relevance of these passages for our topic. What should be highlighted here is the nature of this relevance. I believe that Plotinus' reliance on Plato on this point is a typical case of Plotinian hermeneutics, in the sense that the Principle of Double Activity is not given explicitly in these (rather difficult) texts; instead, as persuasively argued by Emilsson, Plotinus thinks to find hints or confirmations of the principle in the dialogues as he tries to explain how metaphysical causation is supposed to work in Plato. In Emilsson's own words:[92]

> I take it that the doctrine is an interpretation of Plato's views on causality. It is as if Plotinus had put to himself the question: What is the manner of metaphysical causation in Plato, what glimpses do we have of Plato's views on this in the dialogues? And the general answer he comes up with is the

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[89] V.4 [7] 2.33–37: καὶ πολὺ πρότερον ἐκεῖ μένοντος [34] αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ οἰκείῳ ἤθει ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ τελειότητος [35] καὶ συνούσης ἐνεργείας ἡ γεννηθεῖσα ἐνέργεια ὑπόστασιν [36] λαβοῦσα, ἅτε ἐκ μεγάλης δυνάμεως, μεγίστης μὲν [37] οὖν ἁπασῶν… The citation at line 34 is from Plato, *Timaeus* 42e5–6, already quoted at V.4 [7] 2.21.

[90] Gerson (1994, 24–25).

[91] Emilsson (2007, 62, 65).

[92] Emilsson (2007, 67), endorsed by Chiaradonna (2009, 78–79).

> so-called doctrine of double activity. This way of looking at the matter seems to me to be supported by the fact that Plotinus' use of the Platonic passages mentioned above is in general not restricted to the kinds of things at stake in the original Platonic passages. As we have seen, a Platonic passage about the soul and its manner of causation may be used to account for the One's manner of causation. Plotinus indeed generalizes from the Platonic passages.

What the texts from Plato referenced above have in common is that they are descriptions of the relation between the Ideas as causes and their effects, not from the viewpoint of the effects (in which case Plato speaks of imitation, likeness, participation, and so on[93]), but from that of the causes. In other words, Ideas are thought to be the (formal) causes of sensible things, and to speak of the latter as images, copies, or imitations of the former is to express the causal relation between the two. In Plotinus this relation is not limited to Ideas and their effects, but is extended to include all three hypostases and, in some respects, anything that may be said to have causal power (cf. V.1 [10] 6.30–34). Thus, the Principle of Double Activity may be understood as Plotinus' version of this metaphysical causal relation from the standpoint of the cause. Emilsson again puts it well:[94]

> The so-called doctrine of double activity and emanation is meant as an attempt to do just this, i.e. to account for Platonic causes from the viewpoint of the causes themselves rather than the effects. […] [W]hat from the viewpoint of the subordinate items is called participation or imitation may be described in emanative language from above.

To restate the judgment with which I opened these remarks on some of the possible lexical and conceptual sources of the Principle of Double Activity, it seems to me that taken singly, none of these sources—Aristotle, the Stoics,

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[93] In Plato (and in the Platonic tradition) sensible things are metaphorically referred to as images or representations (εἴδωλον: *Sophist* 234c6, 236a6, 239d4, d7, 240a5, a7, 241e3, 260c8, 264c12, *Statesman* 286a1, 303c2, 306d2, *Symposium* 212a4, *Phaedrus* 250d5, *Republic* VII.516a7, 520c4, 532b7, 534c5, X.598b8, 599a7, d3, 600e5, 601b9, *Letters* VII.342b2; εἰκών: *Phaedo* 99e1, *Sophist* 236a8, c3, 240b11, b13, 241e3, 260c8, 264c12, *Phaedrus* 250b4, *Republic* VI.509a9, e1, 510b4, b8, e3, 511a6, VII.517a8, *Timaeus* 29b2–3, c2), copies or imitations (μίμημα: *Sophist* 241e3), likenesses (ὁμοίωμα: *Sophist* 266d7, *Parmenides* 132d3, 133d1, *Phaedrus* 250a6, b3; ὁμοιότης: *Phaedo* 74a7, *Letters* VII.342d2), appearances (φάντασμα: *Sophist* 236b7, c2, *Republic* VI.510a1, VII.516b5, 532c1, X.598b3 and 5), shadows (σκιά: *Republic* VI.510a1, e2, VII.515c2, d1, 516a6, 517d9, 532b7, c1–2), and participants (μετάληψις, μεταλαμβάνειν: *Phaedo* 102b2, *Sophist* 256b6, *Parmenides* 130e5–131a6; μέθεξις, μετέχειν: *Phaedo* 100c5, *Sophist* 256a1, 259a6, *Parmenides* 129d1, 132d3) of the real (that is, intelligible) world.

[94] Emilsson (2007, 67).

Plato—completely explains all aspects of the principle, but taken together, they do contribute to give us a sufficient idea of Plotinus' intention in formulating it. I may then proceed to my other observations on the two passages from the fifth *Ennead* quoted at the outset of this section, V.4 [7] 2.26–37 and V.1 [10] 6.25–39.

It will be noticed—my second observation—that in those texts the One's activity of the essence is prior to its activity from the essence. As with the Principle of Prior Simplicity, the priority at issue should not be understood chronologically but rather as one of being and power. Thus, while it would be true to say that for Plotinus there never was nor will there ever be a time in which the One's (nor, for that matter, Intellect's and Soul's) activity *from* the essence did not exist, it is likewise true that this activity constantly depends, for its being, on a more fundamental activity, the activity *of* the essence, as its necessary condition (cf. II.9 [33] 8.22–26, III.5 [50] 3.1–5, IV.3 [27] 10.32–42, IV.5 [29] 7.17–23, V.1 [10] 3.6–10, V.2 [11] 1.13–18, V.3 [49] 7.19–34, VI.2 [43] 22.26–33). This constant dependence (cf. I.7 [54] 1.26–27, V.2 [11] 1.22, VI.2 [43] 22.33–35, VI.4 [22] 3.8–10) is non-reciprocal, for the activity of the essence is the very being of the thing in question (see VI.8 [39] 4.28, 7.46–54, 12.22–25), that which abides[95] unchanged even while generating something other than itself.

For this reason, as Aubry[96] argues on the basis of *Enneads* V.5 [32] 12.37–41 and VI.1 [42] 22.30–34, we might have to distinguish the One, or the activity of the One's essence, even from its own power. In fact, we should acknowledge a double priority of the One with respect to δύναμις, namely: a priority of the One with respect to the power found in its effects (i.e., all that is derived from the One), and a priority of the One with respect to its own power. Plotinus' emphasis on the transcendence of the One is the main reason for this double priority; this empahsis should suffice, in any event, to concede the priority of the One with respect to its effects. As for the One's priority with respect to its own power, Aubry thinks that it should be acknowledged because the description of the One as the power of all things (V.4 [7] 2.38) introduced earlier already contains a relation to the effects which the One generates through its power, a relation which is nested in the preposition *of* in the expression "power of all things" (or in the genitive, πάντων, in the original expression δύναμις πάντων). Failing to see the priority of the One with respect to its own power, therefore, would amount to a denial of the One's transcendence, for it would imply an identification of the One with its causal function, whereas Plotinus, in the texts cited by Aubry, explicitly states that the One does not need the things that are derived from it (cf. V.5

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[95] Notice the insistent use of the verb μένειν (to remain, to abide) in our passages, V.4 [7] 2.26–37 and V.1 [10] 6.25–39; cf. also III.4 [15] 1.1. See Emilsson (2007, 28–29).

[96] Aubry (2006, 232–234).

[32] 12.40–50), hence as such, *by itself*, it must be other than a cause, other than the productive power of all things. But this, I maintain, is precisely what it means for the One to be identified with its primary activity, the activity of the essence.

My third observation is about the necessity of the activity *from* the essence, which as we saw always depends on the activity *of* the essence and is never separated from it.[97] To contend that the activity *from* the essence is necessarily and constantly connected to the activity *of* the essence would seem to contradict the priority of the latter over the former which I just described in my previous observation; for if the connection is one *of necessity*, in what sense is the activity *of* the essence independent of the activity *from* the essence? Let us remind ourselves that the immediate subject of our questioning is the One, although analogous questions may be asked of Intellect, Soul, and even sensible things. Mindful of this, we ask: How could the One be the One if Intellect (or rather intelligible matter, as we shall see in the next chapter) were not to spring from it as its second activity? The One, by reason of the activity of its very essence, *must* generate Intellect. Are we then to presuppose a necessitating force prior to the One? If so, would the One truly be the Principle? Or are we to say that the distinction between first and second activity is merely conceptual?

First, it is Aristotle who thinks that the agent's acting (e.g., teaching) and the patient's being acted upon (e.g., being taught), though conceptuallly distinct, are in reality one and the same process (*Physics* III.3.202b6–8; cf. also *De generatione et corruptione* I.7.324a9–11).[98] For Plotinus, by contrast, the activity from the essence is really distinct from the activity of the essence, as we saw earlier. This means that the causality of the One, unlike that of the First Mover, is not only final, but also efficient, as it brings into existence (and sustains the existence of) something really other than itself. But ultimately, the key to the questions asked in the previous paragraph, the answers to which are all negative in the *Enneads*, lies in the appropriate grasp of the Plotinian meaning of necessity. I will address a different aspect of this topic in Chapter 4. For now, what we need to keep in mind is that when we say that the whole of reality springs of necessity from a single source, what necessity means in this statement is not external determination,[99] but a superior kind of freedom, one in which the burden of deliberation and choice is absent and in which activity takes place as a matter of pure spontaneity.[100] Plotinus, consistent with his principle that the ἀρχή of something differs from that of which it is ἀρχή (V.3 [49] 15.37–39, VI.9 [9] 6.54–55), calls the One, rather than free, the "maker of freedom" (ἐλευθεροποιὸν: VI.8 [39] 12.19).

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[97] Notice the insistent use of the terms indicating necessity (δεῖ, ἀνάγκη) in V.4 [7] 2.26–37 and V.1 [10] 6.25–39.

[98] Cf. again Rutten (1956, 104–105).

[99] External determination for Plotinus can be of three kinds (VI.8 [39] 9.6–13): (i) force (βία), as in the forced action and motion of which Aristotle speaks (e.g., *Physics* VIII.4.254b13, *Metaphysics* V.5.1015a26–34, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1.1110a1–4); (ii) chance (τύχη), such as happening to be courageous in times of war (VI.8 [39] 5.8–15); (iii) necessity (ἀνάγκη), which counters the activity of reason, such as an artisan's dependence on the nature of

The One, therefore, cannot be other than what it is, not because it is constrained, but because, prior to all deliberation and choice in the ordinary sense of these terms, it possesses a stable grasp of the best course of action, as it were, along with the unwavering will and power to bring it about; indeed, on Plotinus' view, the One is bringing about this course of action *ab aeterno*. In this sense, therefore, although all deliberation is denied of the One (III.2 [47] 1, V.8 [31] 7), the One is said to have will (βούλησις: see VI.8 [39] 13.5–10 and 51), or wish (θέλησις: VI.8 [39] 13.19, 27, 30 and 38, 16.22–23, 18.41–42), and choice (αἵρεσις: VI.8 [39] 13.51). We must grant that this is not the ordinary experience of willing and choice. For example, Plotinus thinks that in ordinary experience we always will what is good, but since there is no good for the One (cf. VI.9 [9] 6.39–42), neither will there be will (βούλησις) in this ordinary sense. However, he also wishes to deny that the One is subject to coercion, chance, or ordinary necessity,[101] and so he resorts to speaking of it as having will, albeit in an unconventional manner. We may refer to this condition, a condition beyond both ordinary freedom and ordinary necessity, as either henologic freedom or henologic necessity.[102] The illustrations given by Plotinus—fire, snow, and odors—may help to clarify the point. Take fire, for instance. In its double activity, since fire comes with heat, it heats of necessity what is within its reach, based on its intensity. If fire did not make things hot, it appears that it would cease to be fire.[103] This fact does not imply any external determination; instead, it follows as a matter of course from

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the material with which he is working (cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 46d5–e6, 47e3–48a5). Since the One, in its activity, depends on nothing external, none of these three types of determination can apply to it (see Gerson 1990, 219–220 for a more detailed exposition of this point).

[100] Combès (1969, 322) puts it sharply: "La nécessité est le détour que la liberté s'impose pour se poser soi-même radicalement."

[101] Analogously, Plotinus says that the One does not think, and yet he is unwilling to call it unthinking (ἀνόητον: III.8 [30] 9.15); instead, he tentatively attributes to it introspection (κατανόησις: V.4 [7] 2.17), forethought (προνοεῖν: V.3 [49] 10.43), and a thought beyond thought (ὑπερνόησις: VI.8 [39] 16.32).

[102] It is true that, as Gerson (1990, 309 note 83) observes, Plotinus uses such terms as ἐχρῆν and ἔδει to indicate the necessity proper to the One in contrast with ordinary necessity, labeled ἀνάγκη (e.g., at VI.8 [39] 9.10–15). However, this distinction, if intended to be technical, is not in use in our key passages on the Principle of Double Activity, V.4 [7] 2.26–37 and V.1 [10] 6.25–39.

[103] The term "fire" (πῦρ) indicates the familiar phenomenon of fire only derivatively. Thus, for Plotinus the fire I experienced, say, in my youth at summer camp is not itself the activity of fire's essence, but one image of that heat itself—the fire beyond, Fire itself (VI.7 [38]

the very nature of fire. Nor does it imply that the nature of fire depends on the observation that we perceive some things as hot; quite the contrary, from the fact that we observe that some things are hot which under different circumstances would be cold, Plotinus thinks it legitimate to infer that there exists a source of heat which, in terms of heating power, is prior to and independent of the things heated.

Once again, it can hardly be overemphasized that the images Plotinus uses to exemplify the double activity of the One should not be taken literally. As illustrations, they evocatively indicate, rather than plainly express, this double activity. More importantly, the type of necessity at work in the phenomena that are the focus of these illustrations obviously differs from the kind of will, choice and freedom that Plotinus attributes to the One. The limitations of these metaphors, however, are not merely negative, for in their failure to express precisely the dynamism at work in the Principle, they positively point at the *discontinuity* between the One and everything else derived from it. In fact, although there is no distinction of first and second ἐνέργεια *within* the One, what derives from the One exists as really distinct from it (though never independent of it for its existence), hence Plotinus' insistence on the transcendence of the Principle and the impossibility of a pantheistic interpretation of his metaphysics.[104] Conversely, these illustrations, however imperfect, also point at the *continuity* between the One and everything else because, despite the differences between the double activity of the Principle and the activities of everything else, the One's first ἐνέργεια (i.e., its very being) is distantly reflected in its second ἐνέργεια. This means that the nature of the cause can be glimpsed through observation of its effects (cf. V.3 [49] 14.7–8), as I argued earlier, or, as we just saw with regard to the Principle of Double Activity, the relation between internal and external activity is to be understood as one of paradigm to image, or of original to copy.

This leads me to my fourth and last observation on the texts taken as evidence of the Principle of Double Activity, a point which here I will only introduce, leaving its development for the next chapter. Prior to Plotinus, the

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11.47, 48: ἐπέκεινα πῦρ, αὐτὸ τὸ πῦρ), or universal fire (IV.8 [6] 3.19: τοῦ παντὸς πυρὸς)—of which all such fires are manifestations. We should again remind ourselves of the metaphorical character of the element of fire as used in this context. Fire is carefully chosen among sensible phenomena as an illustration due to what Plotinus takes to be its closeness to the incorporeal (see I.6 [1] 3.21–22; cf. also Plotinus' remarks on the incorporeal activity of the luminous body at IV.5 [29] 6–7, on which see Armstrong 1937, 53–55; 1940, 54–58). On fire in Plotinus' cosmology see II.1 [40] 7 and comments by Dufour (2003, 145–156) and Wilberding (2006, 208–224).

[104] See Rist (1967, 214–216), Gerson (1990, 214–215), Reale (2004, VIII, 190–191).

likeness between cause (αἰτία, αἴτιον) and effect was primarily conceived of as likeness in kind, as for example the likeness between an oak tree and an acorn (e.g., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* II.1.993b23–31;[105] cf. also *Posterior Analytics* I.2.72a29–30, *Eudemian Ethics* II.6.1222b15–18). But the One is not itself a kind (VI.2 [43] 9.5–10), and qua Principle (ἀρχή) it must be different from what derives from it (V.3 [49] 15.37–39, VI.9 [9] 6.54–55; cf. Plato, *Greater Hippias* 297a2–4, c1–2 and Aristotle, *Movement of Animals* 5.700a35–b3). Therefore, it may be asked what it is exactly that the One causes in its "products." Based on this line of reasoning, and as I already mentioned earlier, Gerson[106] argues that what the One causes is the very being or existence of the thing (cf. I.6 [1] 7.11–12, V.1 [10] 4.29–30, 5.5, VI.7 [38] 42.11, VI.8 [39] 14.29). In this sense, the One is understood as possessing (a very peculiar kind of) efficient causality, which here means the power to cause and sustain existence, while essential or formal causality is reserved to the second hypostasis, Intellect.[107] As I anticipated above, I do not wish to disagree with Gerson on this point, but rather supplement his views from the standpoint of the central theme of this study, love. Thus, in the next chapter I will follow Pigler's suggestion that what the One causes in its "products" is love for the One, which in the Principle is the One's love of itself and the One as itself love.

4 The Status of the Hypostases: Continuity and Discontinuity in Plotinus' Metaphysics

Before I turn to inquire how the Principle of Double Activity operates in each hypostasis from the perspective of love, a few general remarks are in place about the status of the hypostases themselves, which in the technical sense for Plotinus are neither more nor less than three (II.9 [33] 1.12–16, 2.1). The question can be asked briefly in terms of the alternative outlined by Wallis between a static and a dynamic view: Are the hypostases separate independent entities (the static view), or are they levels or degrees of reality present in us as states of consciousness (the dynamic view)?[108]

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[105] Here Aristotle's emphasis is on the idea that the true cause of a feature (e.g., heat) shared by a number of things (e.g., hot bodies) is what possesses that particular feature in the highest degree (e.g., fire). Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima Mantissa* 111.19–22.

[106] Cf. references in note 31 above.

[107] Gerson (1994, 34–35, 58). I hinted that the efficient causality of the One is of a peculiar kind because what the One causes, in this perspective, is not the initiation of change in some pre-existing material (whether immediately or remotely), but existence itself. To this we could add that the One is also the primordial formal cause, not insofar as it imparts a form which characterizes the One itself, but in the precise sense that by lending itself as an object of loving contemplation to what immediately proceeds from it, intelligible matter, it allows Intellect to take on the status of a fully formed hypostasis, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Interestingly, Plotinus seems to endorse both sides of the alternative, as it appears from several passages (e.g., I.1 [53] 8.1–9, III.9 [13] 2.4–5, III.5 [50] 3.25–27, V.1 [10] 10.5–10, V.3 [49] 3.21–32, VI.5 [23] 1.16–26). Thus, at III.9 [13] 2.4–5 he incisively writes: "a man must prepare himself so that the principles in himare also his goals" (χρὴ παρασκευάζειν αὐτόν ὡς τὰς ἀρχὰς τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τέλη εἶναι). The clearest statement of his position is probably found at V.1 [10] 10.5–10:[109]

> And just as in nature there are these three of which we have spoken [viz., the One, Intellect, and Soul], so we ought to think that they are present also in ourselves. I do not mean in [ourselves as] beings of the sense world—for these three are separate [from the things of sense]—but in [ourselves as] beings outside of the realm of sense perception; "outside" here is used in the same sense as those realities are also said to be "outside" the whole universe: so the corresponding realities in man [are said to be outside], as Plato speaks of the "inner man."[110]

As Atkinson points out, the distinction between "in nature" (ἐν τῇ φύσει) and "in ourselves" (ἐν ἡμῖν) can be traced back to Plato (*Phaedo* 102e5, 103b5), and the view that our soul is a microcosm reflecting the structure of the whole of reality is already found in Democritus (DK 68.B34).[111] But for Democritus there seems to be only an analogy of proportionality between the functions of the beings in the world and those of the parts of the soul, namely: just as in the world there are beings whose function is to rule, so there is a part that has the same ruling function within the soul. Plotinus, by contrast, thinks that the higher hypostases are in us, or in the soul, actually (III.4 [15] 3.22, 6.22; cf. also I.1 [53] 13.7–8). At the same time, he claims that all things are in the One, or rather that the One possesses all things beforehand (V.3 [49] 15.27–33, especially lines 29–30: τῷ πρότερον ἔχειν αὐτά). Is Plotinus contradicting himself here? Or is he simply refashioning, without solving it, the dilemma concerning the status of the hypostases?

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[108] Wallis (1995, 5). Whatever the reasons, the view of the hypostases as states of consciousness seems to be more agreeable to a modern sensibility than the view according to which they are separate independent entities (cf. Wallis 1995, 5–6, 72–73, 82; P. Hadot 1993, 23–34; P. Hadot 2002, 163–168; Lloyd 1990, 126; Perl 2015, 16), but this should not be taken to imply that for Plotinus the hypostases exist in thought alone or depend on thought for their existence, as Gerson (1994, 227 note 3) rightly warns us.

[109] V.1 [10] 10.5–10: Ὥσπερ δὲ ἐν τῇ φύσει τριττὰ ταῦτά ἐστι τὰ εἰρημένα, [6] οὕτω χρὴ νομίζειν καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ταῦτα εἶναι. Λέγω δὲ οὐκ [7] ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς—χωριστὰ γὰρ ταῦτα—ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τοῖς [8] αἰσθητῶν ἔξω, καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον τὸ ἔξω ὥσπερ [9] κἀκεῖνα τοῦ παντὸς οὐρανοῦ ἔξω· οὕτω καὶ τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, [10] οἷον λέγει Πλάτων τὸν εἴσω ἄνθρωπον.

[110] See Plato, *Republic* IX.589a7–b1 (ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος); cf. *Enneads* I.1 [53] 10.15 (τοῦ ἔνδον ἀνθρώπου), 7.18–23, III.2 [47] 15.59 (τῷ ἔξω Σωκράτει).

[111] Atkinson (1983, 212–213).

Unless the hypothesis of self-contradiction is taken seriously, evidently the modalities of containment in Plotinus' two statements (i.e., the containment of Soul, Intellect, and the One in the individual soul, and that of all things in the One) must differ. In the former case, to say that the individual soul contains the three hypostases obviously does not mean that their existence depends on that which contains them (and even less that the soul encompasses them spatially or as discrete parts), but rather that the soul has the power to turn toward them and grow in likeness to them.[112] This process of assimilation corresponds to the movement of ascent or return of the soul to the Principle—the main topic of Part 2 of this study. What is important to notice at this stage of our discussion is that the soul's capability of rising to the plane of higher hypostases does not imply any lack or potentiality (in the main Aristotelian sense of the term) in those hypostases. In other words, those hypostases do not achieve a higher level of actuality by being more closely resembled, so to speak, by an individual soul. On the contrary, for Plotinus when we observe something potential in any given thing, the priority in being of the actuality that corresponds to that potentiality must be presupposed. Thus, in the case at hand, we must presuppose the actuality of that to which an individual soul has the ability to become assimilated, namely, the Soul-Hypostasis, Intellect and, ultimately, the One.

Now, the claim that the actuality corresponding to a given potentiality is prior in being to that potentiality has the status of a principle in Plotinus, one to which I will refer as the Principle of Prior Actuality.[113] Like many other principles, this too is not a prerogative of Plotinus, but common possession of the (Neo-) Platonic tradition.[114]

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[112] Cf. Brunner (1973, 93–94), Atkinson (1983, 214).

[113] I modify the expression found in Lloyd (1976, 147), who speaks of a "prior actuality principle." Under the heading of "prior actuality principle," Bussanich (1999, 46–48) includes several elements which I distributed differently in my exposition in this and the next chapters (e.g., the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect and the Principle of Affinity). This should not worry us excessively, however, since all these "principles" or elements are mutually implicating in Plotinian metaphysics.

In the Principle of Prior Actuality, the priority I have in mind refers to the priority that actuality has over potentiality when the latter is generally understood as a principle of change. In this sense, it is standard Aristotelian doctrine, found chiefly in *Metaphysics* IX.8 (cf. also *De interpretatione* 13.23a21–26, *Metaphysics* III.4.999b4–8, V.11.1019a1–14, VII.7.1032a22–25). Aristotle's main reasons to uphold this position can be reduced to the three senses in which he understands the priority of the actual over the potential in *Metaphysics* IX.8. The first is priority of formula or of expression in speech (λόγος), so that that with respect to which the potential is potential is conceptually prior to the potentiality for it (e.g., capability of building is understood on the basis of a previous knowledge of actual building; cf. *De anima* II.4.415a18–20). The second sense of priority is priority of time (χρόνος), as in the priority of the actual individual of a given species over a potential individual of the same species (e.g., the actual tree producing the seed which is potentially another tree of the same species), although the individual itself is in potency to a given state of affairs before being actually in that state of affairs (e.g., a seed is potentially a tree before becoming a tree actually)—(cf. also *On the Heavens* III.2.302a6–9). The third and most important sense of priority is that of priority of being (οὐσία), since things that are posterior in the process of becoming (γένεσις) must already possess the form (εἶδος) of what they are going to be (e.g., a boy must already possess the form of man), toward which they move as toward an end (τέλος). Priority of being can be understood also in a stronger sense (κυριωτέρως), namely, as the priority of eternal (ἀίδια) over perishable (φθαρτά) beings, for in their activity, the former exist only actually and of necessity, thus excluding all potentiality. We find Plotinus formally subscribing to this Aristotelian doctrine chiefly in the third sense (both the general and the stronger meaning), though disagreeing with Aristotle on assigning the title of ἀρχή of all things to Intellect, for example at IV.7 [2] 8^3.13–20, where he also makes clear that the act of a given potency is in a way the desideratum (ὀρεκτὸν) of that potency (cf. also V.9 [5] 4.4–10).

Plotinus uses the Principle of Prior Actuality in different contexts, for instance in his critique of Stoic materialism at VI.1 [42] 26.1–17, where he contends that when the Stoics argue that matter is a principle (ἀρχή) they make the potential prior to the actual.[115] But this cannot be, thinks Plotinus, for the potential, qua potential, is posterior to the actual because it is unable to initiate change; in order for change to occur, the potential needs something actual prior to it. Thus, in the case of matter something actual is required to turn matter into a body by initiating motion. Plotinus applies the Principle of Prior Actuality to the hypostases or real beings themselves, as he states that a higher hypostasis (e.g., the One) is actual prior to a lower one (e.g., Intellect), and conversely that a lower hypostasis is potentially a higher one (see VI.7 [38] 17.6–8).

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[114] See Lloyd (1976, especially 147–148). For a version and defense of the Principle of Prior Actuality in later Neoplatonism see Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 77.

[115] On ὕλη as ἀρχή in Zeno, see SVF I.85, II.300; in Cleanthes, see SVF I.495, II.300; in Chrysippus and Stoicism in general, see SVF II.300–301, 309–310, 312.

At this point it is important to notice that even as Plotinus warns us that causality is predicated of the One only from the perspective of the *causatum* (cf. VI.9 [9] 3.49–54), it is on the basis of the Principle of Prior Actuality that he is able to maintain a certain continuity between the One as cause (or as that whose actuality is prior to all things) and the whole of reality as its effect (or that which depends on the prior actuality of the One). However, this continuity should not be understood as continuity of genus and species, but, as we shall see in the next chapter, as one of decreasing levels of unity and of love, or of increasing multiplicity and of increasing distance between one's relatively unified identity and the final aim of one's love, that is to say, the perfect erotic identity which is the One.

This should suffice as a basic sketch of the Principle of Prior Actuality and of some of the reasons for Plotinus' endorsement of it. But just as we did with the Principle of Prior Simplicity, we could ask whether our principle is sufficiently justified. What truth is there in it, if any? The principle would seem to be a matter of common sense in relation to the cases I reported from Aristotle when I first introduced it. But what is most urgently at issue for Plotinus is the prior actuality—i.e., the actual prior independent existence—of the higher hypostases, and ultimately of the One, with respect to the particular soul where they are first experienced by the embodied individual. The hypostases are experienced, moreover, as desiderata, to wit, as something to which the soul has the ability to become assimilated but is presently not fully assimilated. As with every desideratum, the chief question is whether it actually exists independently of the desire that seeks it; in simpler terms, whether the object of desire, the beloved, is more than a figment of one's imagination. I shall deal with this point more extensively, though largely in indirect fashion, throughout Part 2 and, somewhat critically, in the closing pages of the Conclusion. For the time being, all that needs to be anticipated is that the Principle of Prior Actuality may be said to be true of the higher hypostases, and particularly of the One, only if we can convincingly argue that the love by which the individual soul pursues its assimilation to higher orders of reality, and ultimately to the One, cannot be reduced to any other form of desire. Short of this, the soul will always run the risk of mistaking its love for inferior desiderata as love for the One.

Let us pick up the main thread of our discussion where we left it before I introduced the Principle of Prior Actuality. There I concluded that the first alternative, namely, the view that the higher hypostases are in us, should be understood as meaning that the soul has the ability to turn toward them and become like them. In the second alternative, by contrast, to say that the One possesses all things beforehand does not mean that the One itself is or can become all things, a view that would amount to pantheism and would also introduce potentiality and multiplicity in the Principle. As we saw earlier, the One abides unchanging in its being, which is identical with the activity of the essence. All things are in the One or belong to it in the sense that it is by the One's infinite power that they exist and are sustained in their being. And as Plotinus explains, this modality of containment of things in the One prevents them from being in it as already actually distinct (ὡς μὴ διακεκριμένα: V.3 [49] 15.31). If this were not the case, multiplicity would again creep into the Principle. How, then, does the differentiation of everything derived from the One take place? It occurs first *at* the second level (i.e., at the level of Intellect as the ever actually unified multiplicity of the intelligibles, and the duality of thinker and object of thought), and then *by recourse to* the second level, in the sense that by lovingly contemplating Intellect, soul diachronically makes explicit, unfolds, or temporalizes, the perfectly unified multiplicity of the second hypostasis. As we shall see in the next chapter, the perfectly unified multiplicity of the second hypostasis is itself the result of its even higher form of contemplation of the Principle, a contemplation whereby Intellect constitutes itself as a hypostasis by attempting to replicate the unqualifiedly perfect unity of the One. The source of the differentiation of things is, again, the universal love for the One, now played out either as noetic contemplation of the One or as psychic contemplation of Intellect as each subordinate hypostasis attempts to replicate the unity of the hypostasis immediately above it.

It follows that the hypostases cannot be understood as monads completely sealed off from each other. If this were the case, neither procession nor return could ever take place. On the contrary, the Plotinian metaphysics of the hypostases is one that entails *both* discontinuity *and* continuity or, if one prefers, both the transcendence (e.g., VI.9 [9] 6.55 and the passages indicated in note 10 above) and the immanence (e.g., II.9 [33] 16.11–12, III.8 [30] 9.23–24, VI.4 [22] 2.10–11, 3.17–18) of the Principle with respect to the fabric of derived reality (for statements combining transcendence and immanence, see V.2 [11] 1.1–3, 2.24–29).[116] It entails discontinuity insofar as the hypostases are really distinct or separate from one another and from the sensible cosmos. But it also entails continuity insofar as this separation is not to be understood spatially, but as a priority of being (in accordance with the Principle of Prior Actuality), or the ability of a higher hypostasis to subsist independently of the lower ones while leaving a "trace" (ἴχνος) of itself in its products.

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[116] In several places (e.g., V.5 [32] 8.23–24, VI.8 [39] 16.1–2; cf. also III.9 [13] 4), Plotinus speaks of the One as being everywhere (πανταχοῦ) and nowhere (οὐδαμοῦ), an idea to which

Here we may touch briefly on the concept of trace in the *Enneads* as one of the fitting illustrations of this dynamic of continuity and discontinuity in Plotinus' metaphysics. Analogous concepts include image, likeness, and copy and are listed in the fourth group of references below. P. Hadot writes apropos of the term ἴχνος that it "signifie précisement la trace d'un pas, mais, dans le langage plotinien, il sert à désigner l'image d'elle-même qu'une réalité supérieure projette dans une réalité inférieure."[117] In this general sense the notion of trace is closely related to that of λόγος, the rational forming principle which propagates life and order from the intelligible realities to the sensible universe (e.g., III.2 [47] 2.15–42, 16.10–58.; I will briefly return to this in the next chapter), as well as to the activity *from* the essence as an expression of the activity *of* the essence in the Principle of Double Activity. In providing textual support for this idea, I organize Plotinus' use of the term ἴχνος around five clusters of references, which are by no means exhaustive.

First, the trace of the One: (i) on Intellect: III.8 [30] 11.19–23, V.5 [32] 5.12, 14, 6.17, VI.7 [38] 17.13 and 39, 33.30, VI.8 [39] 18.15, 23; (ii) on all derived reality: III.3 [48] 3.34, V.5 [32] 10.1, VI.7 [38] 18.3, 23.2.

Second, the trace of Intellect: (i) on soul: I.2 [19] 2.20, I.8 [51] 11.17, II.3 [52] 18.16, III.6 [26] 18.32, V.1 [10] 7.44, V.3 [49] 3.12, 6.27, 7.24 and 32, 8.25 and 36, V.8 [31] 13.13, VI.7 [38] 17.39, 20.12, VI.9 [9] 9.16; (ii) on things ontologically posterior to Intellect: VI.6 [34] 18.48, VI.7 [38] 18.2–8. (iii) Other intelligible traces: I.6 [1] 2.9, III.6 [26] 18.4, VI.7 [38] 7.13–14.

Third, the trace of soul on the sensible (or on matter, which by receiving a trace of soul emerges as a sensible cosmos and living body): II.3 [52] 9.22, 33, III.5 [5] 6.25, IV.4 [28] 20.16, 27.3, 11, 28.8, 16, 19, 53, 56, 66, 74, 29.50, 36.7, VI.4 [22] 15.15.

Fourth, the term ἴχνος is also used generally to indicate a lower or derived kind of reality as contrasted with its archetype or source (IV.4 [28] 13.7, 18.30, 44.26, V.3 [49] 9.27, VI.7 [38] 15.8, 22.28). In this sense, the notion of trace is closely associated with the concepts of image or reflection (εἴδωλον: e.g., V.5 [32] 2.7; εἰκών: e.g., I.6 [1] 8.7–8, II.6 [17] 3.18, V.3 [49] 7.30–34, 13.28–31, V.8 [31]

Bussanich (1999, 47, 50) refers as the principle of immanence. In light of my remarks (cf. also note 21 above), I would rather call it the principle of immanence *and* transcendence.

[117] P. Hadot (1990, 125 note 194, and cf. 209–210). See also Leroux (1992).

12.14, VI.9 [9] 9.44; ἔμφασις: IV.3 [27] 18.12; ἴνδαλμα: e.g., I.4 [46] 3.35, IV.4 [28] 13.3), likeness or similarity (ὁμοιότης: e.g., V.1 [10] 7.3, V.3 [49] 8.56; ὁμοίωμα: e.g., IV.5 [29] 7.18, V.3 [49] 8.48, V.6 [24] 5.13, VI.9 [9] 11.43), shadow (σκιά: e.g., I.6 [1] 8.8, II.6 [17] 3.18), impression (τύπος: e.g., IV.4 [28] 13.6, VI.7 [38] 18.3), copy or imitation (μίμημα: e.g., II.4 [12] 4.8, V.3 [49] 16.40, VI.7 [38] 6.28), and appearance (φάντασμα: e.g., VI.2 [43] 22.39; cf. also φαντασία used in this sense at V.6 [24] 5.15). See VI.2 [43] 22.33–46, where several of these terms are used almost synonymously. I do not think there should be much doubt about the origin of this association, which both terminologically and conceptually appears to be the Platonic view of the sensible as an image of the intelligible indicated in note 93 above.

Fifth, other kinds of traces: traces of events in memory (IV.3 [27] 28.17), footsteps (the literal meaning: VI.1 [42] 22.29; cf. also I.3 [20] 1.15).

Now, my contention is that the trace of the Principle in all that is derived from it, or the *fil rouge* of both discontinuity and continuity in Plotinus' metaphysics, is love. Pigler has demonstrated the plausibility of interpreting ἴχνος as the self-love of the One systematically surfacing at each hypostatic level and constituting the very structure of the intelligible world.[118] The self-love of the One, which is identical with its primary activity or activity of the essence, is at the source of all procession: it is the infinite power by which the One engenders all things. This love, which in the One is perfect self-identity, is found in derivative form (that is to say, not as perfect self-identity, but as a love of the Principle with different degrees of intensity depending on the level of unity of the thing possessing it) in everything else. Thus, while the One as self-love abides in its perfect self-identity independently of all that is derived from it (what amounts to discontinuity or transcendence), its infinite power is naturally propagated in the derived hypostases in the form of love for the One (what amounts to continuity or immanence). Love, therefore, is both the source of all procession and the desire for the Principle whereby each lower hypostasis constitutes itself as a really distinct entity by lovingly contemplating the hypostasis immediately superior to it, as we shall see in the next chapter. Pigler makes this point clearly as she states the central thesis of her work:[119]

> Les « tres hypostases », l'Un, l'Intelligence, l'Âme, ne sont pas trois réalité distinctes et séparées, trois « monades ». Certes, si l'Un est bien le Principe absolu dont tout dérive, il y a cependant continuité, et non

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[118] Pigler (2002, 21 and 267–276).

[119] Pigler (2002, 20).

> discontinuité, dans la procession des hypostases. Cette continuité est assurée, telle est notre thèse, par le processus dynamique de l'Érôs de l'Un comme puissance originelle se transmettant dans ses dérivés.

And as I will argue in Part 2, love is also the very condition of possibility of the ascent or return journey of the individual soul to the One.

CHAPTER 2

The Derivation of All Reality from the One as Erotic Procession

The discussion in this chapter presupposes Plotinus' solution to the complex problematic of the derivation of all reality from a single source which I introduced in Chapter 1. On the basis of that solution, I am going to argue that the process of derivation of all things from the One occurs in precise steps, levels, or stages, and can be explained by systematic recourse to the concept of *eros*, or love. Briefly stated, my main thesis is that love is the regulating force of the process of derivation of all things from a simple principle, the One, or that every level of reality in Plotinus' universe unfolds as an expression of love for the level of reality from which it derives (and ultimately for the One), with the One as the self-loving source of all other love, and matter as the last level of the process of derivation in which the love of the Principle comes to a stop. Perhaps it is not superfluous to mention that in this context terms like "level," "above," "beyond," "beneath," and so forth, do not have spatial connotations, much like "before," "after," "first," "last," and so on, should not be understood primarily or neceessarily as implying temporal priority and posteriority. In my exposition in this chapter I take as my point of departure Pigler's monograph, *Plotin, une métaphysique de l'amour*,[1] whose overall thesis I broadly endorse and whose analyses have made my work in the present chapter lighter than it would have been, had her book not been at my disposal.[2]

1 Henologic *Eros*: The One, Perfect Erotic Self-identity and Source of All Love

The importance of the question concerning the love of the One may be better appreciated on the backdrop of the Principle of Double Activity. At V.1 [10]

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[1] Pigler (2002).

[2] Pigler (2002) organizes her exposition around conceptual triptychs, which she relates to the four levels of Plotinian metaphysics: the One (Power-Life-Love), Intellect (Being-Life-Thought), Soul (Nature-Life-*Logos*), and Pre-cosmic Matter (Non-being-Impassibility-Death). By contrast, my discussion in this chapter has a narrower scope: I will focus on the way love functions as a key explanatory concept in Plotinus' metaphysics of derivation, and provide only a limited analysis of most of the concepts presented in Pigler's triptychs.

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6.30–31, one of the two texts about this principle discussed in the previous chapter, Plotinus indicates that the principle applies to all beings (πάντα τὰ ὄντα). Commenting on these lines, Atkinson claims that "[t]he application of the double-activity theory to πάντα τὰ ὄντα is something of an exaggeration," even while admitting that Plotinus treats this theory "like a natural law."[3] He grounds his judgment in the fact that Plotinus chooses to illustrate his principle through the examples of fire, snow, and smell, whose peculiar properties are steeped in the Greek philosophical tradition and are particularly apt to clarify what he had in mind. For example, according to Atkinson it would be Aristotle's use of fire to illustrate causal processes (*Metaphysics* II.1.993b25–26) and such descriptions of it as an "excess of heat" (ὑπερβολὴ θερμότητος: *De generatione et corruptione* II.3.330b25–26) and as a "boiling over" (ζέσις: *Meteorologica* I.3.340b23) that influenced Plotinus' account of the genesis of Intellect from the One at V.2 [11] 1.8–9 as an overflowing and superabundance of the One, which thus produces something other than itself. In a similar way, the (pseudo-) Aristotelian description of smell as an incorporeal "effluvium" (ἀπόρροια: *Problems* XII.1.906a24, 12.907b6–7) would have suited Plotinus' theory.[4]

While Atkinson's observations about the properties of fire, snow, and smell are correct, I think that the universal application of the theory is genuine Plotinian doctrine and is crucial to understand Plotinus' metaphysics. Notice, however, that to claim that the Principle of Double Activity is universal does not mean that Plotinus' illustrations of it are not metaphorical and tell us exactly how it works with respect to the One. In fact, the principle, while universal, applies differently to different things, in particular eternal and temporal beings. For example, heat as the activity radiating from this particular fire will diminish as this fire dimnishes, while in generating Intellect and keeping it in existence the power of the One does not decrease (III.8 [30] 10.6–7, V.2 [11] 1.27–28, VI.9 [9] 9.3; the same point is made about Intellect and Soul at V.2 [11] 2.1–2, a likely echo of Plato, *Timaeus* 42e5–6).[5] Regardless, it seems to me that the universality of the Principle of Double Activity is indicated unequivocally in other passages, for example IV.5 [29] 7.17–20 (my emphasis):[6]

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[3] Atkinson (1983, 145).

[4] Cf. Atkinson (1983, 57–58 and 146).

[5] See Igal (1982–1988, I, 30).

[6] IV.5 [29] 7.17–20: Ἔχει γὰρ ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ἐνέργειαν, ἥ ἐστιν [18] ὁμοίωμα αὐτοῦ ὥστε αὐτοῦ, ὄντος κἀκεῖνο εἶναι καὶ [19] μένοντος φθάνειν εἰς τὸ πόρρω, τὸ μὲν ἐπιπλέον τὸ δὲ [20] εἰς ἔλαττον…

> For *each thing* that exists has an activity, which is a likeness of itself, so that while it exists that likeness exists, and while it stays in its place that likeness goes far out, sometimes a longer, sometimes a lesser distance…

And as we read at IV.3 [27] 10.32–35, the Principle of Double Activity extends even to inanimate things (again, the emphasis in the translation is mine):[7]

> In soulless things the one [power], so to speak, lies asleep in them, while the [power] from them [which goes out] to something else consists in making like themselves that which is capable of being affected: and this is *of course common to all that exists*, to bring things to likeness with themselves.

The same point is made in the lines that follow this passage (IV.3 [27] 10.35–42) with respect to soul, whose proper activity is life and is understood as the attempt to bring inanimate bodies to likeness with itself by animating them, that is, by providing them with life. Moreover, by Plotinus' own admission the axiom of the One's self-diffusiveness introduced in the closing lines of V.1 [10] 6.25–39 (the second main text on the Principle of Double Activity cited in the previous chapter) seems to make sense on the premise that what is true of everything else (i.e., that each thing has an activity from the essence) is true *a fortiori* of the One. Thus, if what Plotinus has in mind at IV.3 [27] 10.32–42 is his own Principle of Double Activity, as I think it is, there seems to be little doubt that he considers this doctrine a universal fact.[8] To acknowledge this is important, among other things, because as I observed earlier it allows for a certain continuity between the various levels or orders of Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy.

The questions about the love of the One I will address in relation to the passages suggesting the universality of the Principle of Double Activity are the following. First, what kind of love is henologic *eros*, or the love of the One? Second, in loving, what does the One give to (or produce as) derived reality? And third, given that the One is essentially *eros*, what does it mean to be brought to likeness with it? I will address the first two questions in this chapter and postpone the treatment of the third until Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

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[7] IV.3 [27] 10.32–35: Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἀψύχοις τὸ μὲν [ἐξ αὐτῶν] [33] οἷον εὕδει κείμενον ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ δὲ <ἐξ αὐτῶν> εἰς ἄλλο [34] ὁμοιῶσαι πρὸς αὑτὸ τὸ παθεῖν δυνάμενον· καὶ κοινὸν δὴ [35] τοῦτο παντὶ τῷ ὄντι εἰς ὁμοίωσιν ἑαυτῷ ἄγειν. I accept von Kleist's transposition of ἐξ αὐτῶν at line 33 from line 32 (von Kleist 1883, 40 note 3), as with HS_2 (HS_1: "fortasse recte"), followed by ARMSTRONG, Igal (1982–1998), Dillon and Blumenthal (2015), Gerson (2018); against Bréhier (1924–1938), Beutler and Theiler (in Harder 1956–1971), Cilento (1947–1949).

[8] Cf. Emilsson (2007, 26–27), Gurtler (2015, 283).

1.1 *The One: Beloved, Love, and Love of Itself*

My central contention in this subsection is that the activity of the essence, which coincides with the very being of the One, or its unqualified unity and infinite power, can be explained in terms of love. In turn, this claim will be the foundation to show that love is what regulates the dynamic of procession of all reality from the Principle. Here I will be concerned only with the descriptions of the One as love and love of itself. I will deal with the description of the One as beloved in Chapter 4. The key texts in support of my main claim are VI.8 [39] 15.1–2 and 16.12–14. Other than these, I know of no other place in the *Enneads* in which Plotinus refers to the One as love of itself, or self-love.[9] Given this lack of textual parallels in the *Enneads*, it would seem plausible to agree with Thesleff as he writes that the identification of the Good, or the One, with *eros* stated at VI.8 [39] 15.1 "may be an occasional lapsus."[10] Works like those by Lacrosse and Pigler[11] (and, I hope, the present one) contribute to demonstrate that, far from being such a lapse, the connection of *eros* with the One is essential to understand Plotinus' philosophy. Here are the two texts which explicitly associate the One with love, in order VI.8 [39] 15.1–2[12] and 16.12–14.[13]

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[9] Leroux (1990, 344) gives III.5 [50] 5.6 as a parallel, but there the topic is the love that grows naturally within the cosmos in the context of an interpretation of Plato which Plotinus rejects (see Kalligas 2014, 520–521). Either the parallel contains a typo or I fail to detect the connection Leroux is suggesting.

[10] Thesleff (1980, 109 note 28), adding that probably Rist (1964, 78–83) made too much of this identification.

[11] Lacrosse (1994), Pigler (2002).

[12] VI.8 [39] 15.1–2: Καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ ἔρως ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔρως, [2] ἅτε οὐκ ἄλλως καλὸς ἢ παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified.

[13] VI.8 [39] 16.12–14: ὁ δ' εἰς τὸ εἴσω οἷον [13] φέρεται αὐτοῦ οἷον ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπήσας, αὐγὴν καθαράν [14] αὐτὸς ὢν τοῦτο, ὅπερ ἠγάπησε. I follow the translation by Leroux (1990, *ad loc.*), which reads: "Lui, Il se tourne pour ainsi dire au-dedans de Lui-même, comme rempli d'amour pour Lui-même et pour sa pure lumière, Lui-même identique à ce qu'Il a aimé." The expression "pure radiance" is an allusion to Plato, *Phaedrus* 250c4 (see further *Phaedrus* 250b1–c1 and 250c8–e1, and *Republic* VI.507b2–509c2), and as ARMSTRONG (VII, 280 note 1) remarks, for Plotinus this light stands for the Good (see I.6 [1] 5.21–22, V.1 [10] 6.27–30, VI.7 [38] 21–22, 36.19–26, VI.9 [9] 4.11, 20). For a short treatment of the metaphor of light in Plotinus see Schroeder (1992, 24–39).

> And it [i.e., the One], that same self, is beloved and love and love of itself, in that it is beautiful only from itself and in itself.
>
> But it [i.e., the One] turns, so to speak, toward its own interior, as if filled with love for itself, pure radiance, itself being identical with that which it loved.

As we consider these texts, let me begin with a terminological observation. One will notice that in 15.1 the term for love is ἔρως, whereas in 16.13–14 it is ἀγαπάω, the verbal cognate of ἀγάπη. Nygren's celebrated distinction between *eros* and *agape* immediately comes to mind, with *eros* standing for merely appetitive desire, and *agape* indicating a purely donative kind of love. Nygren uncompromisingly expresses the incommensurability of *eros* and *agape* as he states: "There cannot actually be any doubt that Eros and Agape belong originally to two entirely separate spiritual worlds, between which no direct communication is possible." And again: "Agape stands alongside, not above, the heavenly Eros; the difference between them is not one of degree but of kind. There is no way, not even that of sublimation, that leads over from Eros to Agape."[14] If we take this distinction at face value, we may be led to think that in these passages Plotinus is talking about two different types of love. However, as Rist rightly points out, Nygren is only statistically correct but in the final analysis too reductive in his judgment, since both Plato and Plotinus "have refined their concept of love in the direction of Ἀγάπη to a degree far greater than Nygren has admitted."[15] Rist points to two possible reasons for Plotinus' lack of consideration for ἀγάπη as a technical term for henologic love: first, in order to stay clear of Christian echoes; second, because in the context of the soul's ascent to the One the two kinds of love, *eros* and *agape* (which for Plotinus are actually two types of *eros*: appetitive desire and the joyful union with the One), "are not entirely separated."[16] My goal is not to consider Nygren's thesis in detail, nor is it to deny that, understood in Nygren's terms, *eros* and *agape* may be useful labels to discriminate between two distinct phenomena, or two radically different types of experience. All I wish to emphasize here is that the distinction between *eros* and *agape*, while conceptually meaningful, is likely to be an exaggeration when applied to Plotinus (as well as to Plato), as it is persuasively argued by several authors.[17]

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[14] Nygren (1953, 31 and 52).

[15] Rist (1964, 85); see also Rist (1964, 79–87, 98–99; 1970b). Leroux (1990, 356) and Pigler (2002, 28 note 1) voice their agreement with Rist.

[16] Rist (1964, 99).

[17] E.g., Markus (1955), Armstrong (1961). The rejection of Nygren's radical discontinuity between *eros* and *agape* is voiced in different contexts also by Burnaby (1938, especially

Be that as it may, what I think can be safely inferred from the texts cited above is that the referent of both ἔρως and ἀγαπάω is the same love of the One. Moreover, the absence of οἷον, Plotinus' quasi-technical term for analogical predication, at VI.8 [39] 15.1 may likely indicate that this passage is one of the places where the author of the *Enneads* comes closest to speaking about the One positively without recourse to analogy. While this is true for VI.8 [39] 15.1, one may object that in the second passage, VI.8 [39] 16.12–14, Plotinus uses the term οἷον twice in close succession (and once more on line 15, although there it seems necessary because Plotinus is drawing a direct comparison with Intellect—VI.8 [39] 16.15–16: οἷον νοῦς). The reason for this is the obvious one that underlies all use of the analogical qualifier, οἷον: to maintain awareness of the distance between the One itself and what we say about it.[18] It is still noteworthy, I believe, that this term is absent in our first passage, VI.8 [39] 15.1–2. The broader context of both passages is treatise VI.8 [39] *On free will and the will of the One*. As the commonly accepted title of this treatise suggests, its goal is to clarify in what sense the One can be attributed a will or freedom. I briefly observed earlier that in reference to the One freedom is identical with necessity. Empirical freedom, or the freedom that has deliberation and choice as its conditions and belongs properly to embodied individual souls capable of reason, is a secondary type of freedom in the sense that it is not truly independent of the relative struggle that these conditions imply: it is a freedom that must always confront itself with the limitations within which it is set. The absence of these conditions and limitations does not entail the absence of freedom *tout court*, but only the absence of that kind of freedom for which they are conditions and limitations. This means that a different type of freedom is at least conceivable, one that is independent of all conditions and limitations and which we could call primary or absolute freedom. This freedom is identical with necessity in the sense that the being which is free primarily or absolutely cannot be other than it is and owes its very being to nothing but itself. This is freedom as pure self-positing, spontaneous self-determination. If freedom is to be attributed to the One at all, this is the kind of freedom that belongs to it, a freedom to which I will accordingly refer as *henologic* freedom.[19]

15–21, 92–100, 121–126, 162–168), Osborne (1994, 54–57 and passim), R. E. Allen (1991, 95–98), and others.

[18] Cf. Pigler (2002, 27).

[19] On the topic of the freedom of the One see Leroux (1990, 23–123) and comments on it by O'Meara (1992); see also remarks in Leroux (1999) in relation to the topic of human

At the level of ordinary or empirical freedom, such phenomena as deliberation and choice, which necessarily accompany this kind of freedom, already point to the fact that as an empirically free being, I am not identical with the aim of my desire (cf. Plato, *Symposium* 200a1–201a1)—indeed that deliberation and choice are some of the means by which I try to bridge the gap that separates my desire from my desideratum. Qua desirer, I am always set apart from that which I desire, always intentionally directed toward something I am not, ever divided in what I merely conventionally call myself, never truly one. For the One the situation is different. Since no gap exists between that which it is and that which it desires, the Principle is identical with its desideratum: at once beloved, love, and love of itself. This is what makes the One different from everything that is derived from it: its absolute erotic self-identity. Thus, as we shall see in Chapter 4, while everything other than the One desires the One as the Good (cf. I.7 [54] 1.22, V.6 [24] 5.18–19, VI.5 [23] 1.11–12), the One desires and needs nothing, or nothing other than itself (cf. I.7 [54] 1.14–15, III.8 [30] 11.23–25, III.9 [13] 9.4–5, VI.9 [9] 6.16–57).

What is obviously problematic in this way of speaking about the One in terms of love is that the One's unqualified simplicity appears to be forfeited in the duality implied by reflexive expressions found in our texts: αὑτοῦ ἔρως at VI.8 [39] 15.1, and ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπήσας at VI.8 [39] 16.13.[20] This problem becomes particularly pressing when these expressions include, or are supplemented by, noetic determinations of the One. Thus, at V.4 [7] 2.16–17, the One is called "self-discerning" (διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ) and "itself the thinking of itself" (ἡ κατανόησις αὑτοῦ αὐτὸ). Other noetic determinations of the One include a kind of wakefulness (οἷον ἐγρήγορσις: VI.8 [39] 16.31), self-consciousness (συναίσθησιν, συναισθήσει: V.1 [10] 7.12, V.4 [7] 2.18), introspection (κατανόησις: V.4 [7] 2.17), and a kind of intelligence that is other than the intellection of Intellect (νοήσει ἑτέρως ἢ κατὰ τὴν νοῦ νόησιν: V.4 [7] 2.18–19). Such noetic determinations can be problematic because the Plotinian One, unlike Aristotle's

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freedom, and Corrigan and Turner (2017, 17–59). Useful shorter accounts include Narbonne (2001, 34–38), Lavaud (2012).

[20] For other reflexive expressions referring to the One (and occasionally to the intelligible world broadly contrasted with the sensible), see for instance V.1 [10] 6.18 (ἐπιστραφέντος ἀεὶ ἐκείνου πρὸς αὑτὸ: ever turned toward itself), V.4 [7] 2.16–17 (διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ: self-discerning; ἡ κατανόησις αὑτοῦ αὐτὸ: itself the thinking of itself), VI.5 [23] 3.1–2 (οὐκ ἐξίσταται αὐτὸ ἑαυτοῦ: does not itself become separated from itself), VI.8 [39] 13.21 (ἑαυτό τε θέλει: wants itself), 14.41 (αἴτιον ἑαυτοῦ: cause of itself), 15.3 (τὸ συνεῖναι ἑαυτῷ: "self-presence," as translated by MacKenna 1917–1930, maintained in MacKenna and Page 1969), and most conspicuously 16.16–39.

First Mover,[21] is of an order that wholly transcends the realm of Intellect, for the activity of Intellect, non-discursive thought, minimally implies both the duality of thinker and object of thought and the multiplicity of the latter (i.e., the plurality of the Forms or Ideas). Thus, the One, insofar as it is absolutely simple, is said to be above thought, or other than thought (cf., e.g., III.8 [30] 11.13–15, V.6 [24] 5, VI.7 [38] 41.17–22, VI.9 [9] 6.50–55).

For this reason, it must be observed that for Plotinus to attribute awareness and thought to the One does not amount to introducing noetic determinations into the Principle nor to disrupting its simplicity. The purpose of these attributions, I believe, is twofold. First, Plotinus wishes to deter his readers from assuming that since the One is beyond thought, it must be inert and ought to lack thinking (III.8 [30] 9.15: ἀνόητον) and self-awareness in the way, say, a stone lacks them. If this were the case, the One would be no different from pre-cosmic matter, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter. Second, he wants to avoid the risk of introducing an unmitigated discontinuity between the Principle and all derived reality. As we saw in Chapter 1, the radical discontinuity between the One and everything derived from it is tempered by the idea that the nature of the Principle is identical with its power (δύναμις) to engender all things, so that the One contains all things, including awareness and thought, within itself in advance, so to speak. As for our being able to state positively what this means in regard to the One's self-awareness, we ought to abandon all discursive expression and rather experience that condition first-hand; but for this to be possible, one would have to have already reached the end of the ascent journey to the Principle and be united with it.[22] Thus, Leroux rightly remarks about the language of reflexivity employed throughout VI.8 [39]: "Des expressions ne sont ici risquées que dans la claire conscience de leur transgression ; elles ne sauraient être érigées en propositions métaphysique susceptibles d'être construites en contradiction avec d'autres. Ce sont en quelque sorte des fusées éclairantes qui s'éteignent dès que leur illumination a produit son effet"[23] (cf. VI.9 [9] 6.50–52).

A related, though perhaps less obvious, problem is the fact that in Plotinus the genesis of each hypostasis is described as a folding or reversion (ἐπιστροφή) upon itself and toward the hypostasis that generated it, an idea to which we might conveniently refer to as the Principle of Reversion. I will discuss the reversion of Intellect toward the One and of Soul toward Intellect in the next two sections. For the moment, suffice it to observe that while the Principle of Reversion does not apply to the One in a strict sense, it is not in principle unthinkable for Plotinus to use the language of self-turning or reversion in speaking about the One, as he does in the references containing reflexive expressions given above, and particularly at V.1 [10] 6.17–19, where he writes: “If anything comes into being after it [viz., the One], we must think that it necessarily does so while the One remains continually turned toward itself,” that is, without moving in any way toward that which comes into being after it.[24]

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[21] At *Metaphysics* XII.9.1074b34–35, Aristotle famously describes the noetic nature of the First Mover through a reflexive expression: "its thought is thought of thought" (ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις).

[22] Cf. Rist (1967, 51–52).

[23] Leroux (1990, 357).

In terms that will become clearer in the rest of this chapter, the Principle of Reversion states that in constituting itself as a particular hypostasis by lovingly or erotically reverting upon itself and toward its generator, every hypostasis, with the exception of the One, replicates the unity of its generator at its own level of existence, an idea that is clearly expressed in V.2 [11] 1. The general idea conveyed by the Principle of Reversion is stated at III.4 [15] 1.8–12, where Plotinus writes about the genesis of the inanimate or lifeless (ἄζων):[25]

> Just as everything which was produced before this [viz., the lifeless] was produced shapeless, but was formed by turning toward its producer and being, so to speak, reared to maturity by it, so here, too, that which is produced is not any more a form of soul—for it is not alive—but absolute indefiniteness.

The same idea is expressed at V.2 [11] 1.9–11 in the context of the derivation of Intellect from the One: “This, when it has come into being, turns back upon the One and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking towards it.” (τὸ δὲ γενόμενον εἰς [10] αὐτὸ ἐπεστράφη καὶ ἐπληρώθη καὶ ἐγένετο πρὸς αὐτὸ βλέπον [11] καὶ νοῦς οὗτος). In fact, the whole first chapter of V.2 [11] may be read as an anticipation of the cyclical process of constitution of reality which will receive a more scholastic formulation in later Neoplatonism in the triad of "abiding" or "rest" (μονή), "procession" (πρόοδος), and "reversion" (ἐπιστροφή).[26] Lloyd puts it well as he highlights the theoretical function of reversion, which is "to complete the reality of what has proceeded and so to give it an identity. [...] So the process is a process of self-determination; and it is supposed to be repeated analogously in every case of the production of a novel entity."[27]

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[24] V.1 [10] 6.17–19: ἀλλ’ εἴ τι [18] μετ’ αὐτὸ γίνεται, ἐπιστραφέντος ἀεὶ ἐκείνου πρὸς αὐτὸ [19] ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι γεγονέναι. The words ἐπιστραφέντος ἀεὶ ἐκείνου πρὸς αὑτό at V.1 [10] 6.18 present a textual crux. If, with HS$_2$, we read αὑτό (reflexive pronoun), the turning will be of the One toward itself, this reading being supported by VI.8 [39] 8.11–13, 15.1. If instead, with HS$_1$ and Atkinson (1983), we read αὐτὸ (demonstrative pronoun), it will be Intellect that is permanently turned toward the One, this reading being supported by V.1 [10] 5.17–19, 7.5–17 (cf. note *ad loc.* in Gerson 2018, 540). For a list of the supporters of each reading see the *Addenda ad textum* in HS$_1$ (III, 397), updated by Atkinson (1983, 135); see Bussanich (1988, 37–43) for an account of the disagreement in relation to another controversial sentence, V.1 [10] 7.5–6. In keeping with ARMSTRONG's translation, I read αὑτό, following Perl (2015, 123–126, as well as 138–141) in support of my preference; see also Igal (1971, 135–136).

[25] III.4 [15] 1.8–12: Ἤ, ὥσπερ πᾶν, ὅσον πρὸ τούτου ἐγεννᾶτο, ἀμόρφωτον [9] ἐγεννᾶτο, εἰδοποιεῖτο δὲ τῷ ἐπιστρέφεσθαι πρὸς τὸ γεννῆσαν [10] οἷον ἐκτρεφόμενον, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐνταῦθα τὸ γεννηθὲν [11] οὐ ψυχῆς ἔτι εἶδος—οὐ γὰρ ἔτι ζῇ—ἀλλ’ ἀοριστίαν [12] εἶναι παντελῆ.

Here we should notice that the self-turning of the lower hypostases and the self-turning of the One are not identical. In fact, the turning upon itself of Intellect and of Soul is simultaneously (though not conceptually) a movement toward the hypostasis immediately above each of them (i.e., the One and Intellect respectively). As Plotinus expressly points out with regard to Intellect at VI.9 [9] 2.35–36, "in turning to itself it turns to its principle" (εἰς αὐτὸν γὰρ ἐπιστρέφων εἰς ἀρχὴν ἐπιστρέφει).[28] However, the One has nothing above itself, for it is the Principle of all things and, as such, ungenerated. Therefore, its turning upon itself does not imply a reference to a higher source as in the case of Intellect and Soul. For the same reason, precisely because the One is ungenerated, its love cannot have any reference beyond itself. Thus, what the reflexive erotic expressions employed to describe it are meant to accomplish, evidently, is not to point at an original split in the Principle but rather to emphasize the self-contained character of henologic *eros*.

Unlike everything else, the One desires and needs nothing outside of itself (notice the same point made by recourse to the language of vision at VI.8 [39]

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[26] E.g., *Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* XIV.21–26; Iamblichus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* fr. 53.20; Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 25–39, especially propositions 26, 30 and 31, *Platonic Theology* II.6.41.20–28, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* I, 371.20–25; Damascius, *De principiis* II.111–173 (especially 123–137); (Pseudo-) Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names* IV.9 (= Migne 1857–1866, III, 705a); in the Latin milieu, cf. Marius Victorinus, *Hymns to the Trinity* III (= Migne 1844–1855, VIII, 1144a): "Status, progressio, regressus: o beata Trinitas." What I have called the Principle of Reversion roughly coincides with the third stage of this triadic movement, ἐπιστροφή. I will discuss a different but related meaning of ἐπιστροφή in the context of the soul's ascent to the One in Chapter 5. For a brief critical assessment of the notion of reversion in Neoplatonism, see Lloyd (1990, 128–130), to whom I owe some of the references in this note.

[27] Lloyd (1990, 127, 128).

[28] Lloyd (1990, 129) observes that "the function of reversion in fixing the identity of something otherwise indeterminate is incompatible with reversion to the cause and belongs only to self-reversion. This may have been insufficiently recognized by Neoplatonists, but they were not forced into a contradiction, so long as they recognized that the ascending reversion implied a prior self-reversion. They usually did."

16.18–21; cf. also VI.7 [38] 35, III.5 [50] 3.11–17). In fact, within the One there is a strict coincidence between its being, its volition, and its life. Take the way Plotinus characterizes the will of the One in the concluding lines of the argument at VI.8 [39] 13.55–59:[29]

> For if his [viz., the One's] will comes from himself and is something like his own work, and this will is the same as his existence, then in this way he will have brought himself into existence; so that he is not what he happened to be, but what he himself willed.

In a seminal article, P. Hadot[30] argued that life (ζωή) constitutes, together with being and thought, one of the three characteristic determinations of the structure and genesis of the second hypostasis, Intellect (see for instance VI.7 [38] 13, 17.14–25, 21.4–6; cf. Plato, *Sophist* 248e6–249a3, *Timaeus* 39e3–9; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072b26–28). In the discussion following Hadot's presentation of his article, Cilento[31] appropriately remarked that in a more ordinary sense life is a peculiarity of soul: so, for example, at VI.7 [38] 11.35, 43 the term ζωή appears to be used synonymously with ψυχή. Then, can life be attributed to the One at all? Plotinus would seem to deter us from doing so (see III.8 [30] 10, VI.7 [38] 17); and yet at I.4 [46] 3.18–20 he writes: "The term 'life' is used in many different senses [Πολλαχῶς], distinguished according to the rank of the things to which it is applied, first, second and so on…" Thus, when Plotinus attributes life to the One (e.g., VI.8 [39] 7.51), we must understand that henologic life is of a different kind from that of Intellect and Soul: it must be a boundless, infinite and unoriginated life. Here again we find the idea that the cause must contain the effect eminently, and so the One is life in the sense that it is the principle of life (III.8 [30] 9.38–39: ἀρχὴ ζωῆς).[32]

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[29] VI.8 [39] 13.55–59: Εἰ [56] γὰρ ἡ βούλησις παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ οἷον ἔργον αὐτοῦ, αὕτη δὲ [57] ταὐτὸν τῇ ὑποστάσει αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς ἂν οὕτως ὑποστήσας [58] ἂν εἴη αὐτόν· ὥστε οὐχ ὅπερ ἔτυχέν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὅπερ [59] ἐβουλήθη αὐτός.

[30] P. Hadot (1960).

[31] In P. Hadot (1960, 152–153).

[32] To stress this point, Pigler (2002, 37–44) calls the life of the One "archi-Vie" (arch-Life) and argues that it is identical with the One's power and self-love. She writes: "C'est pourquoi, si en l'Un il n'y a aucune distinction possible, puisqu'il est l'absolument simple, si en lui tout est strictement équivalent, la lumière, le regard, la Vie, et si surtout tout culmine dans l'Amour que le Principe se porte à lui-même, alors la « conversion » du Premier vers lui-même exprime, plutôt qu'un mouvement, son indicible unité puisqu'elle se fait sans mouvement, l'Un étant absolument immobile, et sans que rien ne soit à voir puisque l'Un n'est pas à lui-même un objet" (Pigler 2002, 41 note 2).

The significance of this brief detour into the concept of life in Plotinus is that it allows us to make an analogous point about the love that the One bears to itself. Thus, love *ordinarily understood*, and in general all love which is not the self-love of the One, has two fundamental features which are missing in the latter. First, it is directed to something good which one does not presently possess (as Diotima tells Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* 205d10–206a13), or with which, even if present, one is not fully identified. And second, it is directed to something superior to oneself (cf. Plotinus V.1 [10] 1.17–19). By contrast, the One is its own beloved and nothing is found to be superior to it. Thus, while the term *eros* is generally attributed to souls that pine after something they find good (either something which they are missing or with which they are not fully identical, even if present to them), when Plotinus attributes love to the One in the two passages cited earlier from *Enneads* VI.8 [39] 15.1–2 and 16.12–14, he cannot have in mind the ordinary sense of love, for unlike any other form of love in the Plotinian universe, the self-love of the Principle is one in which lover and beloved coincide. We may tentatively characterize the self-love of the One as the simple rest of that which is wholly at home with itself: needing nothing, desiring nothing, being nothing other than this self-abiding and self-positing simplicity.

It is at this point that the plot of the derivation narrative thickens. For why and how is it that the One's self-love is the source of all procession? How is it in virtue of the peculiar character of its love, henologic *eros*, that the One is "the power of all things" (cf. V.4 [7] 2.38 and references in Chapter 1 note 68)? That is, why is it not love for another (as one would expect), even an other which does not yet exist, but specifically *self*-love that is productive of otherness? And if, as I argued in the previous chapter, the activity *of* the essence, which in this context amounts to the One's love of itself, is really separated from, or other than, the activity *from* the essence, what does this otherness consist of? Or again, since the One is ineffable, how will we be able to affirm that it gives anything to what is derived from it if, qua simple, it cannot itself be attributed, or be said to possess, whatever it gives? And if the One is also the First, the absolutely prior, what will it have to give—and what to—other than itself? Perhaps more importantly, what does it mean for the Principle to give (of) itself? And lastly, what is the modality of this henologic giving?

1.2 *Superabundance and Its Modality: The One Gives What It Does Not Have*[33]

The problematic character of henologic giving or donation is implicit in the understanding of the Principle as a simple power which is identical with none of the things that are derived from it. Otherwise stated, the simplicity and the transcendence of the Principle would seem to preclude either the differentiation of reality, for qua simple the One contains none of the things derived from it (and if they are not in the Principle, where are they to be found?), or else the very possibility to conceive the One as the Principle of all (for how can it be called the source of all things by utterly transcending them?).

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[33] I borrow this formulation from an article by J.-L. Chrétien (1990, 259–274), "Le Bien donne ce qu'il n'a pas."

A partial answer to these questions was anticipated in the previous chapter, where we saw that according to Plotinus the nature of the One is such that by abiding in its own power, the Principle virtually or eminently contains all things as effects while never actually becoming any of them nor ever depending on, or being related to, them in any way that would imply a change in it. Such claims remain unintelligible, however, unless the nature of the One is determined more precisely. I will argue that this determination can be accomplished in terms of love, that *eros* which Plotinus uses to describe the very being of the Principle. More specifically, there are two different problems which a description of the nature of the One in erotic terms will help us to clarify. The first is the very productivity of the One, or why something whose nature is perfectly identical self-love should be generative of otherness: Why does the One generate anything at all? The second problem concerns the identity of the content—for lack of better terms—of the One's donation or gift in the process of derivation of all reality from it. Simply put, what does the One give?

The question concerning the first production of otherness is central to Plotinus and to all Neoplatonic metaphysics after him. We just saw that the nature or being of the One was described as love of itself, or self-love. So, we ask again: Why *should* something whose nature is perfect erotic self-identity be productive of otherness? In other words, if the One is or exists and can be identified with unqualifiedly simple erotic self-identity, the fundamental question is not "*Whence* otherness or multiplicity?" (for there is no doubt that everything derives from the One), but "*Why* otherness or multiplicity?" This question could have been asked already as we discussed the Principle of Double Activity, which taken at face value, far from offering an immediate justification of the single-source thesis introduced earlier in Chapter 1, actually seems to make such a justification all the more urgent, since it is essential to that principle that the One remain in itself: "But how, when that [viz., the One] abides unchanged [μένοντος ἐκείνου], does [Intellect] come into being?" (V.4 [7] 2.26–27; notice the multiple occurrences of the verb for abiding, μένειν, in chapter 2 of V.4 [7]). *Why* then, rather than whence, otherness or multiplicity?

I will begin by pointing out the obvious: the One's erotic self-identity does not amount to inertia; if it did, there would be no procession or derivation, and the Plotinian universe would be reduced to the immobility of a single monad. Therefore, the One's simplicity is not sterile; instead, it is the simplicity of an infinite power whose self-identity is productive of something beyond itself which is genuinely other than the generator. It is also for this reason, I maintain, that Plotinus found the term "love" and the reflexive expression "love of itself" apt to describe his conception of the Principle: because in the self-contained simplicity of its nature, the possibility of generation, which is characteristic of the physiologically healthy and mature sexual intercourse, is already surmised. And as we shall see presently, this constitutes a fundamental trait of the unfolding of the whole of reality. Thus, as observed by Mazur,[34] Plotinus often expresses the process of derivation from the One at all stages in terms of sexual reproduction, including explicit references to biological aspects of reproduction (e.g., seed, sperm, impregnation, conception, etc.) and suggestive images related to sexual intercourse (e.g., "ejaculatory 'outflows' of spermatic 'nectar', penetrations and 'fillings' of inferior principles by superior ones,"[35] etc.), occasionally as part of his interpretation of a mythical narrative (cf. III.2 [47] 15.15–24, III.5 [50] 9, III.6 [26] 19.25–30, III.7 [45] 11.23–24, III.8 [30] 7.18–26, 10.3–5, IV.3 [27] 10.11–13, IV.7 [2] 13.4–8, IV.8 [6] 6.7–12, V.1 [10] 7.42–47, V.2 [11] 1.7–13, V.8 [31] 12–13, VI.7 [38] 12.22–24, 15.18–20, 16.31–35, 35.30–32, VI.9 [9] 7.23–26, 9.20–22). In this connection, it is worth anticipating that images of love are used to describe not only the first act of generation of derived reality from the One (and, mediately, from the other hypostases), but also the last step of the ascent of the soul to it, union (see Subsection 3.2 of Chapter 6), as if to indicate that the unrepresentable events that take place at the two poles of Plotinus' metaphysics can least imperfectly be put into words through erotic and reproductive metaphors.

The Plotinian answer to the question why multiplicity should emerge from a simple source whose main feature is self-love will be referred to as the Principle of Superabundance. Plotinus variously formulates this principle in several passages, of which the following three may be considered exemplary. The first passage is V.2 [11] 1.7–9 (I provide the full Greek text in note 60 below):

> the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows [ὑπερερρύη], as it were [οἷον], and its superabundance [τὸ ὑπερπλῆρες] makes something other than itself.

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[34] Mazur (2009, especially 71–72), to whom I owe some of the references to the *Enneads* that follow.

[35] Mazur (2009, 71).

Second, at V.3 [49] 16.1–5 Plotinus writes:[36]

> It has been said elsewhere[37] that there must be something after the First, and in a general way that it is power, and overwhelming power; and the point has also been made that this is to be believed on the evidence of all other things, because there is nothing, even among the things on the lower level, which does not have power to produce.

Finally, at V.4 [7] 1.34–39 we read:[38]

> How then could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged to give of itself or were impotent, when it is the productive power of all things? How would it then still be the Principle? Something must certainly come into being from it, if anything is to exist also of the others which derive their being from it; for that it is from it that they come is necessary.

I will attempt to derive the Principle of Superabundance from the foregoing texts and formulate it as follows: Whatever has reached perfection in its own kind overflows and produces something other than itself, until all possibilities have been realized.[39]

The chief source of the Principle of Superabundance is a text from Plato often quoted in the Neoplatonic tradition, *Timaeus* 29e1–3: "He [viz., the Demiurge] was good, and in the good there is never any envy about anything, but being free of it, he wanted all things to become like him as much as possible."[40] And as in the *Timaeus*, the justification of the principle seems to be that the nature of goodness is evidently diffusive of itself. Against this reading of the *Timaeus*, Cornford argues that all that Plato means when he calls the Demiurge ungrudging is that "the imperfection of the world is due to Necessity, not to the deliberate withholding of any excellence that it might possess," and therefore one should not read in the passage unwarranted "importations of later theology."[41] The warning is legitimate, but to claim, as Cornford does, that the notion of an overflowing love would constitute one such importation not only in the *Timaeus*, but in Greek thought as a whole,[42] is, I think, excessive. Plotinus, for one, seems to disprove this claim, even independently of the fact that Plotinian henologic *eros* and Christian love are not identical. Moreover, evidence of the kind of love Cornford claims to be absent in Greek thought can be found, if sporadically and somewhat implicitly, even in Plato (e.g., *Phaedrus* 246d8–e1, 247a7, *Symposium* 206b7–8, *Republic* II.378b8–c3, 379b1–c1 to be read along X.617e4–5, II. 380c8–9, *Laws* IV.713d5–6, V.731d6–732b4, *Timaeus* 28c3–29a6, 37c6–d1), as well as in Aristotle (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.8.1159a23–25, *Meteorologica* IV.3.380a12–15). If anything, these references seem at least to suggest that the conceptual core of the Principle of Superabundance is much older than Plotinus and thus call into question the claim that the Greek philosophical tradition is utterly unfamiliar with the notion of an overflowing, gratuitous love.[43]

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[36] V.3 [49] 16.1–5: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν δεῖ τι εἶναι τὸ μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἀλλαχοῦ [2] εἴρηται, καὶ ὅλως, ὅτι δύναμίς ἐστι καὶ ἀμήχανος [3] δύναμις, καὶ τοῦτο, ὅτι ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων πιστωτέον, [4] ὅτι μηδέν ἐστι μηδὲ τῶν ἐσχάτων, ὃ μὴ δύναμιν εἰς τὸ [5] γεννᾶν ἔχει.

[37] The term "elsewhere" (ἀλλαχοῦ) at V.3 [49] 16.1 may refer to such extended passages as II.9 [33] 3, IV.8 [6] 6, and V.2 [11] 1, which are important parallels of all our texts on the Principle of Superabundance. Cf. also V.1 [10] 6, VI.7 [38] 32.

[38] V.4 [7] 1.34–39: Πῶς οὖν τὸ τελεώτατον καὶ τὸ πρῶτον [35] ἀγαθὸν ἐν αὑτῷ σταίη ὥσπερ φθονῆσαν ἑαυτοῦ ἢ ἀδυνατῆσαν, [36] ἡ πάντων δύναμις; Πῶς δ' ἂν ἔτι ἀρχὴ εἴη; [37] Δεῖ δή τι καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι εἴπερ ἔσται τι καὶ [38] τῶν ἄλλων παρ' αὐτοῦ γε ὑποστάντων ὑπο στάντων· ὅτι μὲν γὰρ ἀπ' [39] αὐτοῦ, ἀνάγκη. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified.

[39] Lovejoy (1936, especially 52–58) referred to a similar idea with the expression "principle of plenitude" (cf. also Wallis 1995, 64–65; Narbonne 2001, 55–56). Whatever the name assigned to it, in later centuries this principle will have its most characteristic heir in the tradition of the *bonum diffusivum sui* (see Trouillard 1955a, 78–79; Chrétien 1990, 259–260; Gerson 1994, 25; Corrigan 2005, 121–122). The "self-" (*sui*) in "self-diffusiveness" (*diffusivum sui*) should be understood in light of my earlier remarks on reflexive expressions.

Leaving aside the exegetic controversy surrounding this passage of the *Timaeus*, how does Plotinus justify the Principle of Superabundance? Consistent with his idea that a glimpse into the cause can be caught through observation of its effects, he argues his point by reference to "things on the lowest level" (τῶν ἐσχάτων: V.3 [49] 16.4). Any thing that has reached its perfection, maturity or completion (τέλεια) naturally generates something other than itself (V.1 [10] 6.37–39, V.4 [7] 1.27–31).[44] To be or actually to exist implies productivity. *A fortiori*, that which exists as the most perfect is most perfectly productive. But again, no indigence in the One is presupposed in the process of generation: the Principle in its primary activity, the activity of the essence, produces of necessity, or because of the thing it is, not for the sake of a further end, and certainly not through external means. And as I observed earlier, the derivation of all things from the One implies no diminishment of power in the One (cf. VI.9 [9] 5.35–38) and is closer to natural production and the production of logical and mathematical representations than to artistic or artisanal production (see V.5 [32] 5.1–14, VI.5 [23] 5).[45] Moreover, the One is not directly involved in the maintenance of what it generates, but abides unchanged beyond its product (see V.4 [7] 2.26–27, 33–37, V.5 [32] 12.40–50). Once again, the likely source of this idea is the *Timaeus*, at 42e5–6: "And having ordered all these things, he [i.e., Demiurge] remained in his state in accordance with his nature; and while abiding…" (Καὶ ὁ μὲν δὴ ἅπαντα ταῦτα διατάξας ἔμενεν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἤθει· μένοντος δὲ…). This applies not only to the relation between the One and its product, Intellect, but also to that between Intellect and its product, soul (V.1 [10] 3.6–12, V.2 [11] 1.13–18). It does not apply, however, to the relation between soul and that to which soul gives life, for as we shall see, in giving of itself, soul is unable to remain unchanged (V.2 [11] 1.18–19).

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[40] Plato, *Timaeus* 29e1–3: ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς [2] περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος· τούτου δ᾽ ἐκτὸς [3] ὢν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ. Cf. *Phaedrus* 247a7.

[41] Cornford (1937, 34).

[42] Cornford (1937, 35).

[43] See again Markus (1955), Armstrong (1961), and especially Rist (1964, 30–40, 79–87, 98–99; 1970b), to whom I owe some of the references to Plato on the topic; cf. also Trouillard (1955a, 60 note 4).

[44] Igal (1982–1998, I, 29–30) considers this idea the core of what I referred to as the Principle of Superabundance and accordingly calls this principle "principio de la productividad de lo perfecto."

Now, this most perfect productivity of the One is erotic in nature in two senses: fundamentally, as we saw earlier, in the sense that the perfection of the One, or its very being, coincides with the One's self-love; derivatively, in the sense that what overflows from the Principle bears the mark of the self-love of the One, and this again in three ways, or for three reasons. First, since as I argued in the closing pages of the previous chapter, a trace of the One is present in its products, self-love also means love of itself insofar as the Principle is present in them. Second, as I shall show in the remainder of this chapter, because when the self-love *of* the One is communicated to (or rather, *as*) what is other than the One, it takes on the character of love *for* the One, hence no longer love of itself, but love of the Principle qua other. To explain how this happens at the levels of Intellect and Soul—the second and third stage in the process of derivation of all things from the One—will be the goal of the remaining sections of this chapter. And third, because when the individual soul, through the process of ascent, achieves union with the One, the One, in loving itself, may be said in some way to love this successful union. I will turn to the ascent in the second part of this study.[46]

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[45] Cf. Trouillard (1955a, 69–74). The undiminished character of the One's mode of donation is often presented as itself a standard Plotinian principle: the principle of undiminished giving (e.g., Wallis 1995, 62; Bussanich 1999, 47, 48–50; Igal 1982–1998, I, 30: "principio de la donación sin merma").

Superabundance, therefore, is the necessary result of the perfection of the One's erotic self-identity. But the Principle is the unqualifiedly simple; even if we concede that, in trying to speak about it, Plotinus may legitimately describe this simplicity as the productive simplicity of an infinite erotic power, what can the One possibly produce? What can it possibly give if, abiding in itself and transcending what derives from it, it possesses nothing other than itself? We saw that Plotinus explains the emergence of things other than the One from the One by means of the Principle of Double Activity. Thus, in the example of fire the heat *of* the essence of fire is naturally productive of a heat that leaves the essence of fire. An illustration of this kind may lead us to think that the difference between the two types of heat is merely one of intensity. But this is not so for Plotinus; or rather, intensity is definitely a problem, but only for the heat *from* the essence: the closer derived heat is to its source, the hotter it is. But fire itself (or Fire) is fundamentally different from the heat derived from it not because it is more intensely hot, but because its heat is unsurpassed, unoriginated and undiminished. It is itself the inexhaustible source of its own heat: Fire itself. This illustration already betrays its own weakness—and the unavoidable weakness of all metaphor—in its attempt to disclose the thing to which it points, for we do not seem to be familiar with something that owes its heat to nothing but itself. More importantly, every source of heat we are familiar with, precisely by diminishing in intensity as it sends out heat, shows that what it gives out is only partially different from itself.[47] The One, by contrast, is expressly said to send out not itself, or *of* itself, but something *other than* itself (the activity from the essence). What, then, does the One send out which is not reducible to the One? What does it give?

Plotinus' solution to this question surely sounds like a riddle. He asserts it repeatedly in the *Enneads*. For instance, at VI.7 [38] 15.19–20 he writes that the Good gave to Intellect "what it did not itself had" (διδόντος ἐκείνου ἃ μὴ εἶχεν αὐτός; cf. also V.3 [49] 14.18–19, 15.7 and 37–38). And more formally at VI.7 [38] 17.3–6 he states:[48]

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[46] On the first and third of these "ways" or "reasons," cf. Rist (1964, 82); on the second, see Pigler (2002).

[47] Cf. Rist (1971, 87).

[48] VI.7 [38] 17.3–6: Ἢ οὐκ ἀνάγκη, ὅ [4] τις δίδωσι, τοῦτο ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ δεῖ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις τὸ μὲν [5] διδὸν μεῖζον νομίζειν, τὸ δὲ διδόμενον ἔλαττον τοῦ διδόντος· [6] τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ γένεσις ἐν τοῖς οὖσι.

> Now, there is no necessity for anyone to have what he gives, but in this kind of situation one must consider that the giver is greater, and that what is given is less than the giver; for that is how coming to be is among the real beings.

The principle according to which the giver gives what it does not itself have will be referred to as Principle of Henologic Giving. First it should be noticed that this principle applies not to everything but to "the real beings" (τοῖς οὖσι) only. I believe that what at first makes the Principle of Henologic Giving appear nonsensical or riddle-like at best is its application to the sensible realm, in which we seem unable to find any strict instantiation of it. And yet, it is through the sensible metaphor of vision that Plato adumbrated what is virtually the same principle: the sun is the giver of the (intelligible) visibility and existence of things (i.e., true beings, as opposed to the shadows in the cave) while itself remaining beyond such visibility and mode of existence (see Plato, *Republic* VI.509b2–10 and the story of the cave in Book VII, which are on the background of VI.7 [38] 15–23, the broader context of the Principle of Henologic Giving).[49]

Of all the principles of Plotinian metaphysics gathered in the Appendix of this study, the Principle of Henologic Giving applies only to the One insofar as the One is the absolutely first term of the process of derivation. In other words, taken strictly it is a henologic principle. P. Hadot writes about this point: "Le problème ne se pose qu'à propos du principe premier, du Bien qui est absolument simple."[50] As we shall see in the next sections, it may be argued that Intellect gives to soul a dianoetic unity which it did not itself have, and similarly that Soul gives to inanimate bodies a kind of organic unity that it did not itself possess in its pure state. It follows that if the Principle of Henologic Giving is strictly henologic, Plotinus must think that what Intellect and Soul give as causes is sufficiently similar to what they possess in themselves. By contrast, if the One gives what it does not have, what it gives is thought to be radically different from what it *does* have, although strictly, qua Simple, the One either has nothing or it possesses everything eminently (V.5 [32] 9.35, 13.34–35).

In this context the One is conceived of as the giver, whereas Intellect is the recipient of the gift (or is itself a gift unto itself). In treatise VI.7 [38], Plotinus spends nine whole chapters to clarify this point (VI.7 [38] 15–23; cf. also V.3

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[49] Cf. the critical apparatus of *Enneads* VI.7 [38] 15–23 in HS_1 and HS_2.

[50] P. Hadot (1988, 272).

[49] 15). What the One is said to give to Intellect while itself remaining beyond what it gives are form and knowability (see VI.7 [38] 16.23–31). This, however, is already a derivative gift, at least conceptually, for as we shall see, the form and knowability essentially constitutive of Intellect are not given immediately but are dependent on a prior given, namely, the love *for* the One. So, the answer to the question "What does the One give?" or "What is this gift which the One gives without itself possessing it?" is: The One gives love for the One. More specifically, the primary otherness, or the One's activity from the essence, is the outpouring of an infinite or boundless love already directed to the One, what Plotinus calls intelligible matter (see note 67 below for references). From this primordial product lovingly directed toward the Principle, Intellect arises successively (though not in the chronological sense) as the contemplative attempt to replicate the unqualified unity of the One. This point should become clearer, I hope, as I consider the unity and *eros* of Intellect in the next section.

We might wonder whether the One, qua self-love, is not already identical with the boundless love pouring forth from it. Plotinus does not think so for one simple reason, namely: this boundless love is not, in a strict sense, *self*-love. To put it another way, the One is different from the love derived from it because this love already aims at something other than itself, to wit, at the One. This is all that differentiates this first "product" from the One, and it may be at least one way to explain Plotinus' identification of Intellect (or rather, of intelligible matter) with the first movement (κίνησις) or otherness (ἑτερότης, τὸ ἕτερον) emerging from the One (e.g., II.4 [12] 5.31–35), as we shall see in the upcoming discussion of the *eros* of Intellect.

An immediate consequence of the Principle of Henologic Giving is that the love found at all levels of derived reality falls short of the self-love of the One, for unlike this, that love is directed to something other than itself. This idea can be subsumed under another general principle, strictly related to the Principle of Henologic Giving and expressly included in the formulation of the latter at VI.7 [38] 17.3–6, namely, the principle according to which a cause is superior to its effect: the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect. Plotinus clearly states it at V.1 [10] 6.37–39: "And all things when they come to perfection produce; the One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly; and *its product is less than itself*" (my emphasis).[51] Likewise explicitly, at VI.7 [38] 17.5–6 he writes: "what is given is less than the giver; for that is how coming to be is among the real beings" (see note 48 above for the Greek text; cf. III.8 [30] 5.24–25, V.5 [32] 13.37–38). On the basis of V.3 [49] 15.7–11, the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect may be given universal application.[52]

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[51] V.1 [10] 6.37–39: Καὶ [38] πάντα δὲ ὅσα ἤδη τέλεια γεννᾷ· τὸ δὲ ἀεὶ τέλειον ἀεὶ καὶ ἀΐδιον [39] γεννᾷ· καὶ ἔλαττον δὲ ἑαυτοῦ γεννᾷ. Igal (1982–1998, I, 30–31) calls this principle "principio de la degradación progresiva." For a treatment of this principle see Lloyd (1976).

> In fact, that which was to come from the One is not identical with it. If, then, it is not identical, it is not better either. For what could be better than the One or transcend it entirely? It is, therefore, worse. And this means that it is more in need. What, then, is more in need than the One? In fact, it is that which is not one. It is, therefore, many, though, nevertheless, desirous of the One. It is, therefore, a 'one-many'.

Generally speaking, the superiority and inferiority stated in the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect is one of unity and being,[53] as already with simplicity in the Principle of Prior Simplicity. When read in terms of love, the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect means that the One, insofar as it is perfect erotic self-identity, produces something that is not perfectly identical with the aim of its love, as is clear from V.3 [49] 15.7–11 cited above. And when this product, in turn, acts as a cause and produces something other than itself, the distance of this successive product from the aim of its love increases (and continues to increase as one proceeds downwards, or further away from the One, in the process of derivation, as I will try to show in the rest of this chapter).

The Principle of Henologic Giving and its corollary, the Principle of the Superiority of Cause to Effect, can also be derived analytically from the vantage point of the One's double causality, efficient and final, on which I touched in Chapter 1 and to which I will return in Chapter 4. As the kind of efficient cause it is (i.e., the unique, unqualifiedly simple First), if, in giving, the One were to give (of) itself, it would have to bring about another itself. But "itself" is the uncaused Principle, while that to which the One would allegedly give (of) itself, by receiving anything at all, would immediately be found in a subordinate position, and hence it would be incapable of being the Principle. To deny this would lead to the paradox of having to postulate the existence of the supposed recipient of the One's self prior to the giving of the gift, when what the One gives is existence itself, here interpreted as identical with love for unity and, ultimately, for the unqualified unity of the One (cf. v.3 [49] 15.7–11, 16.5–8). At the same time, the inability of the recipient to be the Principle shows that what is received by the recipient is nothing that belongs to (or rather, *is*) the Principle. Therefore, the One, in giving, does not give (of) itself. Moreover, nothing that belongs to the One, or, more precisely, nothing that the One is, is accidental to it. If the One gave anything of whatever belongs to itself to something else, it would be giving itself, a proposition which was just found to be untenable. It is because of the nature of its uniqueness, which I discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the Principle of Prior Simplicity, that the One cannot give what it has, or what it is. The First as conceived by Plotinus does not beget another First—indeed, it *cannot*. At the same time, this impossibility should not be understood as lack of power, but rather as a rational necessity and a sign of the One's absolute priority in Plotinus' metaphysics.

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[52] V.3 [49] 15.7–11: Ἢ οὐ ταὐτὸν ἔμελλε τὸ ἐξ ἐκείνου ἐκείνῳ. Εἰ [8] οὖν μὴ ταὐτόν, οὐδέ γε βέλτιον· τί γὰρ ἂν τοῦ ἑνὸς βέλτιον [9] ἢ ἐπέκεινα ὅλως; Χεῖρον ἄρα· τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν ἐνδεέστερον. [10] Τί οὖν ἐνδεέστερον τοῦ ἑνός; Ἢ τὸ μὴ ἕν· πολλὰ ἄρα· ἐφιέμενον [11] δὲ ὅμως τοῦ ἑνός· ἓν ἄρα πολλά. The translation is from Gerson (2018).

[53] See Ham (2000, 256–258).

Along the same lines, and more closely related to our central topic, the One does not bring about another universal final cause. In other words, the One does not give (of) itself as the universal final cause, for in order to give (of) itself in such a way it would have to make the recipient of its gift the ultimate end of all things, the highest desideratum (ἐρασμιώτατον: vi.7 [38] 32.25; ἀγαπητότατον: vi.8 [39] 16.15)—a point with which I will deal more extensively in Chapter 4. But this, again, is inconceivable because that which is supremely loved is such for no other reason than its being the Principle, and the Principle precisely of the love which points back to the Principle as the Good. By contrast, the putative recipient of the status of universal end, precisely by being a recipient, cannot be the Principle, nor can it be, therefore, the highest desideratum or universal final cause.

An interpretation of the Principle of Superabundance and of the Principle of Henologic Giving (along with its corollary Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect) in terms of love also helps us to make sense of two points closely related to the Principle of Prior Actuality introduced in Chapter 1. The first is the notion that the cause, which is prior in actuality to the effect, communicates to the effect a certain feature that it itself possesses. We may refer to this idea as the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, which was already implicit in my brief discussion of the concept of "trace" (ἴχνος) at the end of the previous chapter. A general formulation of the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, simultaneously pointing at the necessity of the activity *from* the essence, is given at ii.9 [33] 3.8: "each of necessity must give *of its own* to something else as well" (ἀνάγκη ἕκαστον τὸ αὑτοῦ διδόναι καὶ ἄλλῳ; my emphasis).[54]

The second point is Plotinus' caveat about attributing any feature (including causality, as in VI.9 [9] 3.49–54) to the One *taken in itself.* This point still holds even when the One's nature in itself is understood as perfect erotic self-identity, provided that we understand the expressions attributing love to the One at VI.8 [39] 15.1–2 and 16.12–14 as affirming, rather than denying, the unqualified unity of the Principle. As for what is said to be communicated in the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, it is not a feature or a property in the strict sense, but the very self-love of the One, which at lower levels of reality necessarily becomes love *for* the One qua other and, indirectly, a way to catch a glimpse of the very nature of the Principle. Moreover, the interpretation of these basic Plotinian principles in terms of love already indicates the way out of the third question that was asked at the beginning of the present section: What does it mean to be brought to likeness with the One? In light of what I have been discussing, it means to grow in unity, in the sense of gradually approximating the point at which the soul is as unified as possible with the aim of its desire. The investigation of this work of approximation will be the focus of Part 2 of this study.

As I shall argue in the rest of this chapter, the love of the One for itself becomes love of the One qua other not only for the primary otherness directly derived from the Principle, but also for everything that proceeds from the primary otherness in the process of derivation. For this reason, love is the element that explains both the discontinuity and the continuity of the Plotinian universe, or both the transcendence and the immanence of the Principle with respect to everything that derives from it. It explains its discontinuity (transcendence), for the love possessed by the One is radically other than the love possessed by everything else; but it also explains its continuity (immanence), because the love possessed by all derived reality is a trace of the One, a sign of the Principle pointing back to the Principle, in which love is pure self-identity, self-positing, and self-determination. Pigler puts it well: "l'Amour de soi du Principe est, en lui, *intransitif,* alors que l'amour et le désir que meuvent les êtres dérivés sont, quant à eux, *transitifs*, en ont pour objet l'Un-Bien."[55]

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[54] The principle is operative at all levels of reality. Thus, Intellect is said to resemble the One, or to be somehow it (V.2 [11] 1.13–14: Οὗτος οὖν ὢν οἷον ἐκεῖνος); soul is said to have an intellectual nature due to its origin in Intellect (V.1 [10] 3.12–15); and bodies are said to be vivified by the presence of soul (IV.3 [27] 10.37–38).

[55] Pigler (2002, 69).

As we saw in the opening pages of this section, for Plotinus the Principle of Double Activity is not merely a way to account for the action of such phenomena as fire, snow, and smell; instead, these are particular cases carefully selected to illustrate a much more pervasive dynamics, one which in his view accounts for the relations among the hypostases, the very fabric of reality. In this section we saw how the nature of the One, the source of this dynamics, can be explained in terms of love: it is perfect erotic self-identity, which coincides with the activity of the One's essence. This activity is the very being of the One, abiding in itself while being productive of otherness. This original otherness, as we shall see in the next section, is the second hypostasis in its incipient stage, intelligible matter.

What the One gives, which it does not itself have, is a love directed to something other than oneself, namely, to the One. This love is desire of unqualified unity, hence a desire to become perpetually identical with the aim of one's desire. Evan a merely cursory reading of the first hypothesis and its consequences in the notoriously challenging second part of Plato's *Parmenides* should suffice to make us realize the sheer difficulty of trying to put unqualified unity into words, if only for the fact that the diachronic nature of all verbal expression entails a necessary departure from such unity. In tentatively speaking about the One, Plotinus describes it from the viewpoint of what is derived from it, while aware that the dependence and relative lack of unity that characterize derived reality are absent in the One. Thus, while the One is called the cause and sustainer of unity or existence from the perspective of everything that is derived from it, taken in itself it is that whose unity and existence are sustained by nothing other than itself; viewed as having a will from the standpoint of rational beings who exercise deliberation and choice, the One is necessary and spontaneous self-determination, free of all deliberation and choice; and spoken of as love, it is perfect erotic self-identity, the universal desideratum desiring nothing beyond itself.

What I will attempt to do in the remainder of this chapter is to show how these descriptions, in particular the one pertaining to *eros*, undergo a fundamental transformation in everything derived from the One, beginning with the hypostasis that immediately proceeds from it, Intellect (νοῦς).

2 Noetic *Eros*: Intellect as the Noetic Replica of the Unity and Love of the One

I will refer to the love properly belonging to Intellect as noetic *eros*. From the standpoint of the observer, noetic *eros* has a double identity: if we focus on its origin, it is the activity springing from the One's essence, whereas if we focus on Intellect taken in itself, it is identical with the activity of Intellect's essence. This preliminary distinction will have to be developed and clarified on the basis of the process of generation of Intellect from the One, as well as of the principles of Plotinian metaphysics that have been introduced thus far. Thus, the question concerning the love of the second hypostasis cannot be dealt with in isolation from other questions about the main features characterizing Intellect, and so, in tackling the issue of noetic *eros*, we must ask: How does Intellect itself originate? How can the nature of Intellect be explained in terms of love? What does pure Intellect have to do with love? And in what sense can Intellect be said to resemble its cause, the One, if the One gives what it does not have and is, unlike Intellect, unqualified simplicity?

I think an effective way to approach these questions is to start from the notion of otherness as a preliminary description of Intellect and then move on to explain how this primary otherness springing from the Principle becomes the full-blown hypostasis of Intellect as the latter lovingly tries to replicate the unity of the One at its own level of existence.

Noetic otherness basically means two conceptually distinct things, one in relation to unity and the other in relation to love. With respect to unity, to be other means to be less than perfectly one, or to be one only in a qualified way. Otherness, therefore, is here synonymous with multiplicity. You will recall that according to the Principle of Prior Simplicity, whatever is composite or multiple owes its being to something more unified than itself and, ultimately, to something absolutely simple. The Principle of Prior Simplicity is thus an explanation of multiplicity as a datum of experience. But the question remains as to how the very first multiplicity ensued from the absolutely simple—how Intellect derives from the One. I will soon turn to this question. For now, we may understand any given multiplicity as a movement away from its source whereby a thing begins to constitute itself as a separate entity. And as I pointed out, this separation is conceived in terms of otherness.

The idea that a thing is separated from other things through otherness may apply loosely to everything in Plotinus' metaphysics, but it is strictly true of incorporeal entities. Bodies, by contrast, are more specifically separated from other bodies spatially (see VI.9 [9] 8.29–33; cf. II.4 [12] 5.28–30). In an important article, Rist[56] observes that otherness is explained metaphorically by recourse to motion (κίνησις), which Aristotle classifies as a process or incomplete activity (e.g., *Metaphysics* IX.6.1048b18–36, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.3.1174a4–b6).

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[56] Rist (1971, 81–83).

Otherness is therefore associated with some kind of desire or striving, in the absence of which we would be left with the perfect stillness of the One (V.1 [10] 4.38–40; the association of otherness and motion occurs also in different contexts, for example at VI.2 [43] 15.11–15, VI.3 [44] 18.13–15, 22.37–45, VI.9 [9] 6.42–43).

Thus, with respect to love, otherness means to be imperfectly identical with the aim of one's desire, and hence to be erotically directed to something other than oneself (even while possessing the desideratum permanently, as we shall see is the case of Intellect in relation to the One). This is true of everything that derives from the One, but not in the same way for everything. When otherness is understood as multiplicity and other-directed love, it is completely absent from the One (VI.9 [9] 8.33–34). As Rist remarks in the same article, "in any particular being the element of otherness is recognizable in the fact that the being is finite. It is not the One; it is only its limited self, limited and hence striving for perfection."[57] The One, by contrast, strives for nothing. And as we saw, the One is the transcendent *par excellence*, wholly other than the things derived from it (see V.3 [49] 11.18, V.4 [7] 1.6, V.5 [32] 10.2–5, VI.9 [9] 3.39–40), not because it gathers within itself the totality of what is multiple, but because it is distinct from all multiplicity. Contrary to this, both Intellect and soul are less than perfectly one and less than perfectly identical with the aim of their respective desire. However, the gap between the perfect unity or erotic self-identity of the One and the qualified unity and erotic status of what is derived from the One is wider in the case of soul than it is in the case of Intellect. Let us here focus on Intellect.

That what derives immediately from the One should be Intellect and not, say, soul or a highly unified sensible organism, is due mainly to the fact that Intellect is taken to be the simplest and most erotically unified level of existence after the First. Put differently, if the source of unity is unqualifiedly simple, unique, and self-diffusive, it follows that what derives immediately from it, though multiple, is the most intensely unified multiplicity. Plotinus identifies this multiplicity with Intellect and expresses the intensity of its unity with the Platonic expression ἓν πολλά (cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 144e5), the one-many (see *Enneads* V.1 [10] 8.26, V.3 [49] 15.11, V.4 [7] 1.21, VI.2 [43] 4.30–32, 15.14–15, 17.25, VI.7 [38] 14.11–12; cf. also III.7 [45] 3.4–7, III.8 [30] 8.30, VI.4 [22] 11.16, VI.5 [23] 6.1–3, VI.6 [34] 8.22, VI.7 [38] 8.17–19).[58]

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[57] Rist (1971, 83).

[58] Elsewhere, Intellect is variously described as "many in one and one over many" (πολλὰ ἐν ἑνὶ καὶ ἓν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς: VI.5 [23] 6.2–3), a "one-all" (ἓν πάντα: III.6 [26] 6.23, V.3 [49] 15.23), and more often an "all-together" (ὁμοῦ πάντα: II.6 [17] 1.10, III.6 [26] 6.23, V.3 [49] 15.21, V.8

Now, how does Intellect come about, or how is it engendered from the One? And what kind of unity belongs to its multiplicity? Among the passages in which Plotinus presents the genesis of the first otherness from the One[59] is the sequel of a text I cited earlier as one of the formulations of the Principle of Superabundance, V.2 [11] 1.7–13:[60]

> This, we may say, is the first act of generation: the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself. This, when it has come into being, turns back upon the One and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking towards it. Its halt and turning towards the One constitutes being, its gaze upon the One, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and being.

What can be minimally claimed on the basis of this passage is that according to Plotinus the genesis of Intellect comprises more than one stage or phase (which, of course, should not be taken as chronologically successive). I will hold that the generation of Intellect entails at least two stages: one in which the superabundance from the One comes into being, and another in which by turning toward the Principle, being filled by it, and looking toward it, this superabundance becomes Intellect proper. Traditionally, these two stages have been called Loving Intellect and Thinking Intellect respectively (here capitalized for disambiguation), or what Plotinus himself at VI.7 [38] 35.24 refers to as

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[31] 9.3, V.9 [5] 6.8, VI.4 [22] 14.6, VI.5 [23] 6.3, VI.7 [38] 33.8); cf. also note 103 below. For the Platonic background of these descriptions, see Chapter 3 note 22.

[59] Here is a list of some of the chief passages where Plotinus describes the genesis of Intellect, with the main theme of each description given in parentheses: V.1 [10] 7.1–19 (sight), V.2 [11] 1.7–13 (superabundance and otherness), V.3 [49] 11.1–16 (desire and sight), V.4 [7] 2.19–40 (thought, double activity), V.6 [24] 5.5–12 (sight, desire and thought), VI.7 [38] 15–17 (life, generation, vision, light, activity).

[60] V.2 [11] 1.7–13: καὶ πρώτη οἷον γέννησις αὕτη· ὂν γὰρ τέλειον τῷ μηδὲν [8] ζητεῖν μηδὲ ἔχειν μηδὲ δεῖσθαι οἷον ὑπερερρύη καὶ τὸ [9] ὑπερπλῆρες αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο· τὸ δὲ γενόμενον εἰς [10] αὐτὸ ἐπεστράφη καὶ ἐπληρώθη καὶ ἐγένετο πρὸς αὐτὸ βλέπον [11] καὶ νοῦς οὗτος. Καὶ ἡ μὲν πρὸς ἐκεῖνο στάσις αὐτοῦ [12] τὸ ὂν ἐποίησεν, ἡ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ θέα τὸν νοῦν. Ἐπεὶ οὖν [13] ἔστη πρὸς αὐτό, ἵνα ἴδῃ, ὁμοῦ νοῦς γίγνεται καὶ ὄν. See also V.5 [32] 5.16–19: “For this which we call primary being [ὂν […] πρῶτον] proceeded [προβεβηκὸς], so to speak [οἷον], a little way from the One, but did not wish to go still further, but turned inwards [μεταστραφὲν δὲ εἰς τὸ εἴσω] and took its stand [ἔστη] there, and became substance [οὐσία] and hearth [ἑστία] of all things…” See also III.8 [30] 9.29–32, V.1 [10] 5.3–19, 7.5–35, V.3 [49] 11.4–12, V.4 [7] 2.4–7, and VI.7 [38] 35.19–33.

"Intellect in love [νοῦς ἐρῶν]" and "Intellect in its right mind [νοῦς ἔμφρων]" (cf. also III.8 [30] 9.29–32, V.3 [49] 16.38–42).

Whether these stages are indeed two, as I maintain, or more is matter of debate, but I do not think it makes any substantial difference to Plotinus' views on the issue. For example, in his commentary to VI.7 [38] 15–17, P. Hadot argues that these chapters of this foundational treatise of the *Enneads* present the genesis of Intellect in several parallel accounts (e.g., VI.7 [38] 15.10–23, 16.10–32, 16.32–35, 17.11–32, 17.32–36), each including, not two, but three phases, namely: (i) Intellect which is not yet Intellect, but rather an indeterminate proto-ἐνέργεια or proto-Life; (ii) the formation of Forms or Ideas within Intellect as a fragmentation and determination of the indeterminate proto-Life through a turning of Intellect toward the One; (iii) Actual Intellect as the conscious self-identity of the totality of Forms.[61] As I said, whether these phases are two or more does not substantially modify Plotinus' views on the issue. One can still follow Hadot but merge his phases (ii) and (iii) into a single phase, or read them as two sub-phases within a single phase. Thus, Hadot's division is broadly followed and further explained by Pigler[62] in her treatment of noetic *eros*, and what I referred to as Thinking Intellect seem to comprise both (ii) and (iii) in Hadot's division. In similar fashion, Igal[63] calls the dynamic by which Intellect is generated "principio de la génesis bifásica," and aptly refers to the first stage as "fase proódica" (i.e., Hadot's first phase above) and to the second as "fase epistrófica" (regulated by what I called the Principle of Reversion), with the latter including both the turning of the generated toward its generator and its own τελείωσις or fulfillment (i.e., Hadot's second and third phases respectively).

Plotinus himself writes about these two phases of the genesis of Intellect at VI.7 [38] 35.23–27:[64]

> And that first one is the contemplation of Intellect in its right mind, and the other is Intellect in love, when it goes out of its mind "drunk with nectar"; then it falls in love, blooming in its enjoyment by having its fill; and it is better for it to be drunk with a drunkenness like this than to be more respectably sober.

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[61] P. Hadot (1988, 259–278).

[62] Pigler (2002, 89–103).

[63] Igal (1982–1998, I, 31–32 and 45–46).

[64] VI.7 [38] 35.23–27: Καὶ ἔστιν ἐκείνη μὲν [24] ἡ θέα νοῦ ἔμφρονος, αὕτη δὲ νοῦς ἐρῶν, ὅταν ἄφρων [25] γένηται μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος· τότε ἐρῶν γίνεται [26] ἁπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ· καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ μεθύειν [27] βέλτιον ἢ σεμνοτέρῳ εἶναι τοιαύτης μέθης. The translation that follows is by ARMSTRONG, minimally modified.

Two observations on two potentially confusing aspects of this text are needed. First, the context of the passage is not the procession of all reality from the One, but the ascent of the soul to it. This fact alone may suffice to explain what in the text would appear as an inversion of the order of the two stages of Intellect from the perspective of its generation from the One—Loving Intellect and Thinking Intellect. Secondly, the expression "drunk with nectar" (μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος) at line 25 is a clear reference to Plato, *Symposium* 203b5, also occurring earlier in the treatise at VI.7 [38] 30.27. An allusion to the same text by Plato in the *Enneads* is III.5 [50] 9.5, but there the referent of this drunkenness is not Intellect, generally represented by Cronus, but Poros, who represents the rational principles or *logoi* from the intelligible.[65]

Loving or pre-noetic Intellect is what elsewhere is called infinite life (VI.7 [38] 17.14–15: ζωὴ [...] ἀόριστος)[66] or, more technically, intelligible or noetic matter (ἡ νοητὴ ὕλη)[67] and the indeterminate or indefinite dyad (ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς).[68] All these expressions are synonymous in Plotinus: they stand for the very "first movement" or otherness away from the Principle (cf. II.4 [12] 5.28–30), the most intensely unified reality immediately derived from the One. As Plotinus explicitly states at V.1 [10] 6.53, the One and its immediate offspring are separated only by otherness (τῇ ἑτερότητι μόνον κεχωρίσθαι). All that seems to differentiate this movement or otherness from the One is that while the latter is self-love directed to nothing other than itself, the former is erotically directed not to itself but already to the One qua other.

This connatural inclination toward the Principle is the very mark or trace (ἴχνος) of the One on all that is derived from it. And since the One was positively described in terms of *eros*, this mark is itself erotic in nature. Although Plotinus states this explicitly only once in the *Enneads*, the reference is significant. In describing the ascent of the soul toward the One, he writes: "As long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it [viz., to the soul], it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by *the giver of its love*" (VI.7 [38] 22.17–19; my emphasis).[69] Armstrong aptly comments on these lines: "This is the clearest statement by Plotinus of something implicit in his whole system, that our desire to return to the Good is given by the Good."[70] A similar idea is found at VI.7 [38] 34.1–2, where Plotinus refers to the One as "that which produces these strangely powerful longings" (τὸ τοὺς δεινοὺς πόθους παρέχον). In terms of the Principle of Double Activity, we could say that this love, the trace of a superior reality on an inferior one, constitutes the very essence of the lower reality and at the same time the second activity (or activity from the essence) of the higher one. In terms of the Principle of Reversion, *eros* is the very force which allows for the reversion toward the Principle (and with it, the emergence of a new hypostasis) to take place. The reversion of Intellect toward the One is attested in several places in the *Enneads*, for instance: II.4 [12] 5.31–34, V.1 [10] 7.5–6, V.2 [11] 1.9–11, V.4 [7] 2.4–7, VI.7 [38] 16.14–22; cf. also V.3 [49] 16.38–42, VI.8 [39] 6.32–36.

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[65] See Section 3 of Chapter 3. On the relation between the drunkenness of Poros (of Platonic descent) and that of Cronus (of Orphic descent), see Porphyry, *Cave of the Nymphs* 16, 67.21–68.1; cf. P. Hadot (1988, 39–42).

[66] Cf. VI.7 [38] 17.32–33: "the life which is a universal power" (ἡ μὲν ζωὴ δύναμις πᾶσα); III.8 [30] 9.33: "first life" (ζωὴ πρώτη).

[67] Plotinus refers to intelligible or noetic matter with different expressions, most notably ἡ ἐκεῖ ὕλη (II.4 [12] 4.6–9, II.5 [25] 3.9), ἡ ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ὕλη (II.4 [12] 5.13–14, 38, 15.18, III.8 [30] 11.4), and ἡ νοητὴ ὕλη (III.5 [50] 6.44). Aristotle, too, speaks of an intelligible (νοητή) kind of matter in contrast with a perceptible (αἰσθητή) kind, but for him intelligible matter means either the matter of mathematical objects when these are abstracted from all that is perceptible (*Metaphysics* VII.10.1036a9–12), or else the generic element in a definition and in a species (*Metaphysics* VIII.6.1045a33–35); cf. W. D. Ross (1924, II, 199–200, 238), Igal (1982–1998, I, 44).

[68] On the indefinite dyad see V.1 [10] 5.14, V.4 [7] 2.7–8. The history of this concept before Plotinus is long, as even a merely selective overview of testimonies would show (e.g., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XIII.7.1081a14–15, *On the good* fr. 2; Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 6a24–b5, 11a26–b7; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* X.261, 262, 275–277).

The primary otherness generated by the One (i.e., Loving Intellect, or intelligible matter, or the indeterminate dyad), is at the same time and in its very nature erotically charged and directed toward the One. As we saw, Plotinus describes the erotic status of this primary otherness in visual and desiderative terms. Before it fully constitutes itself as a hypostasis, Intellect in its incipient stage is, in Plotinus' own words at V.3 [49] 11.12, "only desire and unformed sight" (ἔφεσις μόνον καὶ ἀτύπωτος ὄψις). Successively, from the vision of what is naturally its object of desire—the One—Loving Intellect becomes Thinking Intellect. Plotinus offers a description of this transition at V.6 [24] 5.5–19:[71]

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[69] VI.7 [38] 22.17–19: Καὶ ἕως τί [18] ἐστιν ἀνωτέρω τοῦ παρόντος, αἴρεται φύσει ἄνω αἰρομένη [19] ὑπὸ τοῦ δόντος τὸν ἔρωτα.

[70] ARMSTRONG (VII, 157 note 2).

[71] V.6 [24] 5.5–19: Τὸ γὰρ νοεῖν οὐ πρῶτον οὔτε τῷ εἶναι οὔτε τῷ [6] τίμιον εἶναι, ἀλλὰ δεύτερον καὶ γενόμενον, ἐπειδὴ ὑπέστη [7] τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ <τὸ> γενόμενον ἐκίνησε πρὸς αὐτό, τὸ δ' ἐκινήθη [8] τε καὶ εἶδε. Καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι νοεῖν, κίνησις πρὸς ἀγαθὸν [9] ἐφιέμενον ἐκείνου· ἡ γὰρ ἔφεσις τὴν νόησιν ἐγέννησε καὶ [10] συνυπέστησεν αὐτῇ· ἔφεσις γὰρ ὄψεως ὅρασις. Οὐδὲν οὖν [11] δεῖ αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν νοεῖν· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἄλλο αὐτοῦ τὸ [12] ἀγαθόν. Ἐπεὶ καὶ ὅταν τὸ ἕτερον παρὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸ νοῇ, [13] τῷ ἀγαθοειδὲς εἶναι νοεῖ καὶ ὁμοίωμα ἔχειν πρὸς τὸ [14] ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὡς ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐφετὸν αὐτῷ γενόμενον νοεῖ καὶ [15] οἷον φαντασίαν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ λαμβάνον. Εἰ δ' ἀεὶ οὕτως, ἀεὶ [16] τοῦτο. Καὶ γὰρ αὖ ἐν τῇ νοήσει αὐτοῦ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς [17] αὐτὸ νοεῖ· πρὸς γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν βλέπων αὐτὸν νοεῖ. Ἐνεργοῦντα [18] γὰρ αὖ ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ· ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια ἁπάντων πρὸς τὸ [19] ἀγαθόν.

> For thinking does not come first either in reality or in value, but is second and is what has come into being when the Good [already] existed and moved what had come into being [viz., Loving Intellect] to itself, and it was moved and saw. And this is what thinking is, a movement towards the Good in its desire of that Good; for the desire generates thought and establishes it in being along with itself: for desire of sight is seeing. The Good itself then must not think anything: for the Good is not other than itself. For when what is other than the Good thinks it, it does so by being "like the Good"[72] and having a resemblance to the Good, and it thinks it as Good and as desired by itself, and as if it had a mental image of the Good. And if it is like this for ever, it thinks the Good for ever. And again, in thinking the Good it thinks itself incidentally: for it is in looking to the Good that it thinks itself; for it thinks itself in actual activity; and the actual activity of all things is directed to the Good.

And here is how, at v.3 [49] 11.8–12, Plotinus describes the emergence of Thinking Intellect in terms of a fragmentation of the One's unity grasped in the sight of Loving Intellect:[73]

> The sight, again, certainly has the impression of what is seen: otherwise it would not have allowed it to come into existence in itself. But this impression became many out of one, and so Intellect knew it and saw it, and then it became a seeing sight. It is already Intellect when it possesses this, and it possesses it as Intellect; but before this it is only desire and unformed sight.

This connatural desire and unformed sight of the One is as if impressed with the nature of its desideratum or object of vision, the One itself. At a basic level, this means two things: on the one hand, that the desire for the One which is intelligible matter is always naturally directed toward its desideratum; on the other, that this desire is already a desire to replicate the unity of the One, or to become that unity somehow. In order to replicate the unity of the One while remaining other than the aim of its desire, this incipient Intellect must break down its desideratum into parts, as it were, due to its inability to grasp it whole (cf. VI.7 [38] 15.20–22). To emerge as the thinking hypostasis, Intellect must turn its vision into a multiplicity, noetic multiplicity.

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[72] The term ἀγαθοειδὲς at v.6 [24] 5.13 is a likely allusion to Plato, *Republic* VI.509a3. Cf. also v.1 [10] 7.2: δεῖ πως εἶναι ἐκεῖνο.

[73] v.3 [49] 11.8–12: Καὶ γὰρ αὖ ἔχει τύπον τοῦ ὁράματος· ἢ οὐ παρεδέξατο [9] ἐν αὐτῇ γενέσθαι. Οὗτος δὲ πολὺς ἐξ ἑνὸς ἐγένετο, [10] καὶ οὕτως γνοὺς εἶδεν αὐτό καὶ τότε ἐγένετο ἰδοῦσα [11] ὄψις. Τοῦτο δὲ ἤδη νοῦς, ὅτε ἔχει, καὶ ὡς νοῦς ἔχει· πρὸ δὲ [12] τούτου ἔφεσις μόνον καὶ ἀτύπωτος ὄψις.

What kind of multiplicity is noetic multiplicity, the multiplicity proper to Intellect? It is certainly not a multiplicity of discrete parts which can be separated or even run through discursively in thought. Instead, it is the self-thinking and self-enclosed multiplicity of reciprocally implicating or interpenetrating parts: the intelligibles, Forms, or Ideas. Thus, on the one hand it would seem more precise to say that Loving Intellect is not unqualifiedly simple rather than it is multiple, for although it is true that it is not yet (logically) broken down into the plurality of the Ideas, it is still not identical with the aim of its desire. On the other hand Thinking Intellect, or the actual second hypostasis, is rightly called multiple in at least two respects: first, because qua thinking it remains minimally other than its object, that is, the intelligibles, Forms, or Ideas (see III.8 [30] 8.30–31, 9.5, III.9 [13] 1.12–15, 7.4–5, IV.3 [27] 1.12–13, V.3 [49] 10.44–46, V.4 [7] 2.8–11, VI.7 [38] 39.1–14, VI.9 [9] 2.36–37); and secondly, because its object itself is a multiplicity (see II.4 [12] 4.2–3, IV.3 [27] 4.9–11, V.1 [10] 7.30, V.9 [5] 8.1–8, VI.2 [43] 21.53–59, VI.4 [22] 4.23–26, VI.5 [23] 6.1–3, VI.7 [38] 11.14–18, 37.18, VI.9 [9] 5.15–16). The multiplicity of Intellect is indeed as highly unified a multiplicity as one can conceive, but it is multiplicity nonetheless (see III.8 [30] 8.31–48; cf. also IV.8 [6] 3.9–10, V.3 [49] 10.8–16, VI.7 [38] 8.17–19, 39.14–16), and as such it necessarily implies a failure to be *unqualifiedly* simple. Thus, Pigler[74] aptly remarks:

> Dans le Νοῦς s'achève ainsi l'acte de voir, qui est aussi acte de penser : parce que l'Intelligence ne peut posséder l'Un dans sa vision, elle le pense en elle-même dans la multiplicité des formes, et ce qu'elle pense, ce qu'elle contemple, a une « ressemblance avec le Bien ». La pensée est donc bien l'œuvre du désir, désir de voir l'Un sans y parvenir (c'est pourquoi ce désir s'achève dans l'acte de penser), mais aussi désir de posséder l'Un sans y parvenir (c'est pourquoi ce désir s'achève dans la multiplicité des formes).

Noetic multiplicity owes its existence to the fact that since the One is, strictly, unthinkable, Intellect exercises its thinking activity on itself as a diluted image or replica of the One. As Rist[75] points out,

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[74] Pigler (2002, 115).

[75] Rist (1971, 83). The Greek in the citation is from Plotinus VI.7 [38] 35.20–21.

> [t]he peculiar mark of νοῦς thinking is that it recognizes its own contents as they are, and they are a plurality (τὰ ἐν αὑτῷ βλέπει). Νοῦς in fact recognizes its own otherness. The peculiar mark of intuitive thought is that it is an attempt to think the One, but a failure to grasp the One without otherness; and otherness implies recognizable "parts".

When in its ascent to the One the soul reaches the level of Loving Intellect, its condition is a kind of blending (οἷον συγχέασα: VI.7 [38] 35.33) with the One, which it sees as a whole. In this sense, the loving state of Intellect is superior to its thinking state owing to its greater proximity to the One and to the infinity of its love for the Principle, a love which, as we saw, is the very trace of the self-love of the One.[76]

Intellect's act of thought is its very being, which alone is true being in virtue of the perfect correspondence between the act of thinking and that which is thought (cf. III.8 [30] 8.6–8, V.1 [10] 4.21–25, V.3 [49] 5.36–37, 13.22–31).[77] The identity of thought and being in Intellect, which represents Plotinus' interpretation of the Parmenidean τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι (DK 28.B3),[78] constitutes the purest activity (V.3 [49] 6.5–8), a noetic-intuitive vision in which nothing external to be "seen" is needed (V.3 [49] 8.39–41). In this sense, the reversion of intelligible matter toward itself is its own self-knowledge (cf. V.3 [49] 7.18–19, V.5 [32] 5.16–19, VI.7 [38] 16.14–22) and, indirectly, the attempt to reproduce, *as thought*, the unqualified unity from which it sprang. Intellect is thus a harmonious union of identity and difference (or otherness), a multiplicity that is constantly unified both by intelligible matter, here understood as the "stuff" that is common to all the intelligibles, and by the eternal act of thinking which characterizes each of its parts. This act of self-knowledge is the very life of Intellect; it is the act by which intelligible matter, erotically turned toward the One, determines itself as noetic life, thought and being (see V.3 [49] 5; cf. III.8 [30] 8.26–30, V.2 [11] 1.12–13, V.3 [49] 8.36–41, V.4 [7] 2.44–46, VI.7 [38] chapters 13, 16, 17, and 21, VI.9 [9] 9.17). The life of Intellect is a circular, self-enclosed movement through which Intellect realizes itself as thought, a thought which is completely self-transparent and eternal.[79] It must be stressed that such a life is rooted in the superabundance of the One, which by leaving an erotic trace of itself in its closest product, allows for the genesis of the second hypostasis as the noetic replica of its own unqualified unity. Thus, at V.9 [5] 2.26–27 Intellect is explicitly described as being "like an impression of it [i.e., the One] in greater multiplicity, while the Good remains altogether in one" (ὥσπερ ἐκείνου τύπος μᾶλλον ἐν πλήθει ἐκείνου πάντη μένοντος ἐν ἑνί). And at V.4 [7] 2.26 the thought of Intellect is called "an imitation and image" (μίμημα καὶ εἴδωλον) of the One.

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[76] As Pigler (2002, 107) notes, "cette empreinte est, dans la hiérarchie ontologique, double : à la fois vie et amour ; et c'est ainsi qu'elle constitue la *meilleure image de l'unité* absolument simple puisque, la Vie de l'Un est Amour."

[77] In Plotinus, therefore, it is not the One, but Intellect that represents the totality or plenitude of being, for being includes all determination, and as such it implies multiplicity: cf. III.3 [48] 3.22–24, III.8 [30] 8.40–48, IV.3 [27] 4.9–11, V.1 [10] 4.21–22, V.3 [49] 11.20–22, V.5 [32] 3.1, V.9 [5] 6.1–3, 7.11–12, 14.5, VI.2 [43] 21.27–32, VI.6 [34] 7.1–4, VI.7 [38] 8.27–32, 17.33–34, VI.9 [9] 2.44–47.

[78] Plotinus quotes Parmenides' dictum nearly verbatim some seven times (cf. HS$_2$, *Index Fontium*) and alludes to it several other times (cf. Stamatellos 2007, 191–192). On thinking and being in Parmenides and Plotinus, see Stamatellos (2007, 59–88).

More in keeping with our topic, the unity in multiplicity that is proper to Intellect, the one-many, is also characterized by Plotinus as φιλία or friendship (cf. III.2 [47] 1.30–32, VI.7 [38] 14.20–23), a kind of internal love or a perfect harmony of parts that are never separated, and can be understood as an image of the self-love of the One. But as an *image* of the unity of the Principle, noetic unity cannot itself be unqualified unity, and so it must be multiple, even if its multiplicity is of the most perfectly unified kind. As I pointed out earlier, such is the multiplicity of thought, which encompasses both the duality of thinker and object of thought and the plurality of the intelligibles themselves.

Now, if thinking is essentially a multiplicity, the One cannot be thought as it is, as pure unity. Thus, in order to become thinkable, its unqualified unity has to be made multiple, or broken up. And as we saw, this is the birth of Intellect as the thinking hypostasis. The thought of Intellect, however, is not one whose object is external and whose parts unfold in (relatively) orderly succession (as we shall see is the case for the Soul-Hypostasis), and whose contemplation is intermittent (as for a rational individual soul); it is rather a thought that contains all its parts as eternally present and mutually implicating or interpenetrating: not discursive thought (διάνοια, or διανόησις, as the proper mode of thought of soul), therefore, but noetic, intuitive, or non-discursive thought (νόησις: see V.3 [49] 6.7, V.4 [7] 2.4, 18–19, VI.2 [43] 21.27–32; cf. also I.4 [46] 10.18–19, II.9 [33] 1.37–38, 46–50, III.9 [13] 7.4, IV.8 [6] 3.6–7, V.1 [10] 7.10–11, V.3 [49] 5.31–43, V.9 [5] 8.16–19, VI.6 [34] 6.23–24, VI.9 [9] 5.12–20).[80] Noetic thought is thus the expression of the proximity of Intellect to the One as regards unity and love.

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[79] See Pigler (2002, 102).

[80] As customary with Plotinus, the terminology is only somewhat technical, and so νόησις and νοεῖν are not always used strictly to mean the activity of Intellect (νόησις: e.g., I.6 [1] 6.12, VI.6 [34] 4.14; νοεῖν: e.g., I.2 [19] 3.15, 20, 24, II.4 [12] 10.20, II.9 [33] 1.60, IV.4 [28] 26.29, IV.7 [2] 8.1, 8^1.7, IV.8 [6] 3.22, V.1 [10] 7.46, V.2 [11] 2.10, VI.9 [9] 9.14). In treatise I.1 [53] when νόησις is used in the plural, it means intellectual acts which may belong to soul (see I.1 [53] 1.8, 7.16, 9.21, and similarly 13.7 for νοεῖν; cf. III.5 [50] 7.56, III.6 [26] 1.10, IV.4 [28] 17.1), while when it is used in the singular it refers to pure noetic thought (I.1 [53] 2.28, 10.8, 13.5–6;

What I presented so far was a sketch of the generation of Intellect, as well as its proper activity, noetic thought as the peculiar kind of thinking that characterizes the second hypostasis. But what about the desire of Intellect? So far we have seen that Intellect in its incipient stage, what is referred to as intelligible matter, is also described as Loving Intellect, the first product of the One whose principal characteristic is precisely to be lovingly directed toward its generator. The question, here, is about the desire of Intellect as a fully constituted hypostasis, Thinking Intellect. What kind of desire characterizes it? I pointed out that, considered in itself, Intellect displays a kind of self-contained harmony among its parts, the intelligibles, a harmony which Plotinus calls friendship. But this is not all. The love proper to Thinking Intellect is not exhausted in the perfect internal harmony that characterizes its multiplicity. Instead, just as with the love of its Loving counterpart, the love of Thinking Intellect includes a reference to a beloved beyond itself, a reference which, moreover, is the very reason of its internal harmony. Unsurprisingly, this reference is to the One. What kind of love, then, is noetic *eros*? Briefly stated, the answer is that the love of the fully constituted second hypostasis is satisfied love, desire fulfilled. Plotinus explains this in a passage worth citing in full, III.8 [30] 11.15–25:[81]

> For Intellect needs the Good, but the Good does not need it; hence too, when it attains the Good it becomes conformed to the Good and is completed by the Good, since the form which comes upon it from the Good conforms it to the Good. A trace of the Good is seen in it, and it is in the likeness of this that one should conceive its true archetype, forming an idea of it in oneself from the trace playing upon Intellect. The Good

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cf. IV.3 [27] 30.12, VI.7 [38] 41.17–19); see Aubry (2004, 374, s.v. νόησις). At I.2 [19] 3.24–25 Plotinus is most explicit in emphasizing that the meaning of νοεῖν varies depending on the identity of the thinker: “The soul’s intellectual activity is different: but of the realities There one [i.e., Intellect] thinks differently, and the other [i.e., the One] does not think at all” (Νοεῖ τε ἡ ψυχὴ ἄλλως· τῶν δὲ ἐκεῖ [25] τὸ μὲν ἑτέρως, τὸ δὲ οὐδὲ ὅλως); cf. also V.3 [49] 6.2–5.

[81] III.8 [30] 11.15–25: Ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, τὸ δ’ ἀγαθὸν οὐ [16] δεῖται ἐκείνου· ὅθεν καὶ τυγχάνων τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀγαθοειδὲς [17] γίνεται καὶ τελειοῦται παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, τοῦ μὲν εἴδους [18] τοῦ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἥκοντος ἀγαθοειδῆ [19] ποιοῦντος. Οἷον δὲ ἐνορᾶται ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἴχνος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, [20] τοιοῦτον τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐννοεῖν προσήκει τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἐκείνου [21] ἐνθυμηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ νῷ ἐπιθέοντος ἴχνους. [22] Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ ἴχνος αὐτοῦ τῷ νῷ ὁρῶντι ἔδωκεν [23] ἔχειν· ὥστε ἐν μὲν τῷ νῷ ἡ ἔφεσις καὶ ἐφιέμενος ἀεὶ καὶ [24] ἀεὶ τυγχάνων, ἐκεῖ δὲ οὔτε ἐφιέμενος—τίνος γάρ οὔτε [25] τυγχάνων· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐφίετο. ARMSTRONG’s translation, slightly modified.

> therefore has given the trace of itself on Intellect to have by seeing it, so that in Intellect there is desire, and it is always desiring and always attaining, but the Good is not desiring—for what could it desire?—or attaining, for it did not desire [to attain anything].

It would seem that a desire essentially possessing its desideratum should hardly be called desire. For this reason, it is important to emphasize that, although permanently attained, the desire of Intellect remains desire, for unlike the *eros* of the One, it is a love for something other than Intellect, which as such is not identical with the aim of its love. Therefore, the self-sufficiency of Intellect, repeatedly voiced in the *Enneads* (e.g., III.7 [45] 4.33–43, V.3 [49] 17.1–14) ought to be properly qualified. On the one hand, Intellect is indeed self-sufficient insofar as it is always unfailingly in the condition of noetically contemplating the One, thanks to which it can be the kind of unity it is, a one-many containing its object of thought, the Forms or Ideas, within itself (or *as* itself). However, Intellect cannot be said to be self-sufficient in an absolute sense, since it is not the object of its own desire; instead, it owes its identity as Intellect (even as *Thinking* Intellect) to the fact that its activity is a noetic replica of that which it eternally and lovingly contemplates, the One, which alone possesses a love that seeks nothing beyond itself. Pigler rightly observes that the One represents for Intellect "la plénitude de la Vie et de l'Amour *sans objet*."[82] She explains that noetic self-sufficiency is a trace of the One's self-love, while the One, on its part, "n'a *pas besoin* de lui-même, car il se possède *immédiatement*, il est donc *hypernoèsis*, car en lui il n'y a nulle multiplicité à penser, nul besoin de conquérir l'unité qu'il *est*"[83] (cf. III.9 [13] 9.4–5, V.1 [10] 6.42–43, V.3 [49] 16.25).

A similar qualification must be made about the pure actuality of Intellect, that is, the activity of thought, or rather the activity of self-thought as the identity of thinker and intelligible object (cf. V.3 [49] 5.41–48, 6.5–8, 7.13–20), as well as its identification with Being which I pointed out earlier. Plotinus claims that the thinking of Intellect constitutes its being and is ever actual not simply because what we might refer to as its noematic side (i.e., the intelligibles) is eternally contemporaneous with its noetic side (i.e., the act of thinking), but more fundamentally because the intelligibles are never external to Intellect and so the two are a unity: Intellect as the unified and eternally actual totality of the Ideas—and hence, remotely, of all that receives form—thinking themselves (see II.5 [25] 3.25–33, 38, II.9 [33] 1.29–30, 2.2–3,

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[82] Pigler (2002, 107).

[83] Pigler (2002, 111).

III.9 [13] 6.4–7, IV.4 [28] 1.17–18, V.1 [10] 12.3–4, V.3 [49] 5.25–48, 6.5–8, 7.13–20, 25–26, 8.36–41, V.9 [5] 5.1–19, 7.8–9, 8.15–19, VI.2 [43] 21.24–27, VI.6 [34] 6.30–36, 8.19–20).

In apparent contradiction with what I just stated, at III.8 [30] 11.1–2, Plotinus describes Intellect as a passage from potency to act. He writes at III.8 [30] 11.1–9:[84]

> And again, consider it this way, for since Intellect is a kind of sight, and a sight which is seeing, it will be a potency which has come into act. So there will be a distinction of matter and form in it, but the matter will be [the kind that exists in] the intelligible world: since actual seeing, too, has a doubleness in it, it was, certainly, one before seeing. So the one has become two and the two one. For seeing, then, fulfilment and a kind of completion comes from the object perceived, but it is the Good which brings fulfilment to the sight of Intellect. For if it was itself the Good, why would it have to see, or to be active at all?

As I just hinted above, the contradiction between the descriptions of Intellect as pure actuality and the one found in this passage, describing it as a movement from potency to act, is only apparent. The latter description, I believe, does not detract from the claim that Intellect is pure actuality because in it Plotinus is not saying that there ever was a moment in which Intellect was in a state of potency from which it later developed into actual (i.e., thinking) Intellect, but rather that it is necessary to postulate a conceptual distinction of stages, potential and actual, although Intellect was always already actual.[85]

More importantly, in this passage Plotinus is clearly stressing the idea that the eternal activity of Intellect is not self-sufficient, because it depends for its actuality on the contemplation of the One much like vision depends on the object of sight, but this contemplation is eternal, hence even its dependence on the One does not undermine its pure actuality. Thus, what we are told is that even the actuality of the perfectly unified multiplicity which is Intellect would cease to exist unless a prior—more fundamental—actuality were already in place. This is the unqualifiedly first actuality of the One, an actuality which, as Plotinus maintains, is the actualization (ἐνέργημα) not of something else, but of itself.[86] In other words, the actuality of Intellect is the actualization of the unity or the self-love of the One in a noetic mode (much like soul is the actualization of Intellect in a dianoetic or discursive mode, as we shall see in the next section). The actuality of the One, by contrast, only actualizes itself, for that toward which it is erotically directed is nothing but itself. Therefore, the actualization of Intellect qua thinking hypostasis is posterior in being to, or is a consequence of, the infinite self-sufficient power of the One (see VI.9 [9] 6.10–26). The infinity of this power is replicated in Intellect as the infinite movement of thought of the second hypostasis. More precisely, the resemblance of the One in Intellect is what in Intellect lacks form, namely, the unlimited or infinite life that constitutes Intellect in its first stage (Loving Intellect), the indeterminate life of intelligible matter as a trace of the One (see VI.7 [38] 17.12–14).[87]

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[84] III.8 [30] 11.1–9: Ἔτι δὲ καὶ ὧδε· ἐπεὶ γὰρ ὁ νοῦς ἐστιν ὄψις τις καὶ [2] ὄψις ὁρῶσα, δύναμις ἔσται εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἐλθοῦσα. Ἔσται [3] τοίνυν τὸ μὲν ὕλη, τὸ δὲ εἶδος αὐτοῦ—οἷον καὶ ἡ κατʼ [4] ἐνέργειαν ὅρασις—ὕλη δὲ ἐν νοητοῖς· ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ ὅρασις ἡ [5] κατʼ ἐνέργειαν διττὸν ἔχει· πρὶν γοῦν ἰδεῖν ἦν ἕν. Τὸ οὖν [6] ἓν δύο γέγονε καὶ τὰ δύο ἕν. Τῇ μὲν οὖν ὁράσει ἡ [7] πλήρωσις παρὰ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ ἡ οἷον τελείωσις, τῇ δὲ [8] τοῦ νοῦ ὄψει τὸ ἀγαθὸν τὸ πληροῦν. Εἰ γὰρ αὐτὸς τὸ [9] ἀγαθόν, τί ἔδει ὁρᾶν ἢ ἐνεργεῖν ὅλως; See also III.9 [13] 8.5. For the matter in the intelligible world mentioned in verse 4, see II.4 [12] 2–5.

[85] See Corrigan (2005, 184–185).

In this context, we can also conceive of eternity, the way of being of Intellect, in terms of love. Eternity (αἰών) is here understood as "that which is always," according the etymology given by Plotinus at III.7 [45] 4.42–43: αἰὼν γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀεὶ ὄντος.[88] This etymology of αἰών is already found in Aristotle (*On the Heavens* I.9.279a25–28),[89] but as Beierwaltes remarks, its philosophical sense is different in Plotinus, for it does not mean infinite time (as in Aristotle), but, more in keeping with the use of the term introduced by Plato (cf. *Timaeus* 37d3–7), a complete simultaneity.[90] The eternal is a fullness of life in which there is neither past nor future since in it everything is already beheld or possessed *toto simul* (ὁμοῦ τὸ ὅλον: III.7 [45] 2.18) and as if always in the present (ὄντος δ' ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἀεί: III.7 [45] 3.21–22; see especially III.7 [45] 4.28–43, 5.19–30; cf. also I.5 [36] 7.24–30, VI.5 [23] 11.14–38). Beierwaltes also explains that in this context "always" (ἀεί) means both always *already* and always *again*: not in the extensive sense of an infinity of time, but in the a-temporal or de-temporalized intensive (Platonic) sense of being truly or authentically (ἀληθῶς εἶναι: III.7 [45] 6.13).[91] Eternity is thus not simply identical with the second hypostasis; it is rather the proper way of being of Intellect manifested through Intellect and, one might add, *strictly only* through Intellect.[92] The eternity of Intellect is the actuality of an unchangeable condition that is not unqualified immobility or rest (στάσις; see III.7 [45] 2.20–36), but a life in which the difference of thought and the multiplicity of reciprocally implicating intelligibles dynamically sustains itself as thought in immanence, without having to appeal to an external object of thought or to an external thinker (see III.7 [45] 3.15–23).[93]

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[86] VI.8 [39] 16.16–17: Νοῦς δὲ ἐνέργημα· ὥστε ἐνέργημα αὐτός. Ἀλλὰ [17] ἄλλου μὲν οὐδενός· ἑαυτοῦ ἄρα ἐνέργημα αὐτός. See also VI.8 [39] 16.35–39, and cf. V.6 [24] 5.5–10, 6.1–9.

[87] The same issue is treated in terms of Beauty and light by Pigler (2002, 121–129); cf. Plotinus V.5 [32] 7.16–35, V.8 [31] 4.4–15, VI.7 [38] 22.1–7.

[88] In treatise III.7 [45] *On time and eternity*, the meaning of αἰών does not seem to differ significantly from that of ἀΐδιος and ἀιδιότης (see Beierwaltes 1967, 156–158). Detailed analysis of questions concerning time and eternity in Plotinus can be found in the full commentary on treatise III.7 [45] by Beierwaltes (1967); Pigler (1999) is a shorter commentary; for a concise treatment of Plotinus' views of time and eternity see Smith (1999a).

[89] See also Chrysippus, SVF II.163; John of Scythopolis, *Scholia to Corpus Areopagiticum* II.10 and V.4 (= Migne 1857–1866, IV, 229a and 313c respectively).

[90] See Beierwaltes (1967, 145, 190).

From the standpoint of our main theme, eternity can be viewed as another way of speaking of the friendship among the intelligibles which characterizes the realm of Intellect: it is the condition of Intellect as the activity of the reciprocally implicating intelligibles, thinking themselves without any division or otherness between thinker and object of thought and without any discursive gap among themselves. This fact is the very expression of the love of Intellect, noetic *eros*, a changeless and most intensely unified multiplicity and the noetic replica of the absolute unity to which it is erotically related: the One as the object of love which is other than Intellect but of which Intellect is constantly in possession.

Now, if the actuality which is Intellect is the wholly self-enclosed effort to replicate noetically the unqualified unity and erotic self-identity of the Principle, how are we to justify the generation or procession of soul from the second hypostasis? Based on the principles of Plotinus' metaphysics introduced thus far, the answer must be that a trace of the One in Intellect implies not only unity, though of a noetic kind, but also production, that is, not only an activity *of* the essence but also an activity *from* the essence. Thus, just as Intellect is at the same time the activity *of* its own essence and the activity *from* the essence of the One, likewise soul will be at the same time the activity *of* its own essence and the activity *from* the essence of Intellect. Moreover, the generation of soul will not be arbitrary, but a necessary act (of love) springing from the very nature of its generator. And finally, it is by turning upon itself and toward its generator that soul will emerge as a distinct hypostasis, with its own proper mode of unity and of love, to which I will refer as psychic unity and psychic *eros*.

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[91] See Beierwaltes (1967, 45–47, 205).

[92] Hence the similarity of the descriptions of the two in Plotinus himself (e.g., eternity as ὁμοῦ τὸ ὅλον at *Enneads* III.7 [45] 2.18; Intellect as ὁμοῦ πᾶς at VI.4 [22] 4.26, and as ὁμοῦ ἐν ἑνὶ πάντα at VI.6 [34] 7.4; cf. Parmenides, DK 28.B8.5, speaking about being as ὁμοῦ πᾶν), despite the fact that he does not wish to identify them.

[93] For a discussion of the problem see Beierwaltes (1967, 35–49).

3 Psychic *Eros*: Soul as the Discursive Replica of the Unity and Love of Intellect and Informing Principle of the Sensible Universe

The third hypostasis is the most complex in Plotinian metaphysics, and understandably so, for while itself belonging to the realm of the supersensible, by its nature soul (ψυχή) is capable of pervasively interacting with two very different orders of reality, the intelligible and the sensible. This is not the place to try to provide a detailed mapping of the hypostasis soul, but a rough outline of its basic divisions may nonetheless be useful as a reminder for the reader who is only minimally familiar with the distinctions of Neoplatonic metaphysics. The main divisions of the structure of the third hypostasis in Plotinus can be summed up as follows.[94]

First, there is the Soul-Hypostasis, sometimes called Whole Soul (ἡ ὅλη ψυχή: e.g., IV.3 [27] 1.33, 2.55; πᾶσα ψυχή: e.g., III.9 [13] 3.1, VI.7 [38] 12.21), Separate Soul (χωριστὸν ψυχή or ἡ χωριστὴ ψυχή: e.g., III.5 [50] 2.23, 3.22; cf. also I.1 [53] 10.9, I.8 [51] 14.17–19), Pure Soul or Soul alone (μόνον ψυχή: e.g., III.5 [50] 3.31), Soul simply (ἁπλῶς ψυχή: e.g., III.5 [50] 3.31), and Higher Soul or Superior Soul (ἡ ἄνω ψυχή: e.g., III.5 [50] 3.19, III.9 [13] 3.5–6, V.2 [11] 1.23). Simplifying to the extreme, the Soul-Hypostasis is soul contemplating Intellect uninterruptedly and without directly interacting with the sensible universe. In this context, notice that "Pure Soul" should not be confused with "purified soul." The former is the Soul-Hypostasis as mere soul; the latter is the individual soul that has succeeded in the process of purification which I will discuss in the last chapter.

Second, we have the soul which is involved in the ordering and maintenance of the sensible universe. This, in turn, comprises two subdivisions, (i) the World-Soul and (ii) individual or particular souls.

(i) The World-Soul is otherwise referred to as the Soul of the Whole or Soul of the All (ἡ τοῦ παντός ψυχή: e.g., II.9 [33] 7.5, III.1 [3] 8.5, IV.3 [27] 1.17 and 20, V.1 [10] 10.22, VI.7 [38] 7.9; ἡ τοῦ ὅλου ψυχή or ἡ τῶν ὅλων ψυχή: e.g., IV.3 [27] 1.36, IV.7 [2] 13.9) and the Cosmic Soul or Soul of the Cosmos (ἡ τοῦ κόσμου ψυχή: I.2 [19] 1.7–8, II.9 [33] 17.19, III.4 [15] 6.23, V.9 [5] 4.14–15).[95] Sometimes in secondary literature on Plotinus the World-Soul is also called Universal Soul, even if, as Helleman-Elgersma points out, the expression would apply more properly to the Soul-Hypostasis.[96] In order to avoid confusion, I will steer clear of the expression altogether. The work of the World-Soul is to make the material universe into a cosmos by maintaining it and governing it in accordance with the contemplation of Intellect via the Soul-Hypostasis. I should add that the World-Soul may also be thought of as further divided in a higher and a lower part. The higher part is what in Chapter 3 I will call its intellect and is found to be represented by Zeus in treatise III.5 [50]; the lower part is the World-Soul itself, or Nature, as immanently at work in the sensible cosmos (cf. IV.4 [28] 13.19–25). We may also refer "Nature" to the totality of the World-Soul, but even when we do so, we should remain mindful of the distinction that was just drawn between a higher and a lower part in it, that is, respectively its intellect and Nature proper, immanently at work in the sensible universe.

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[94] For detailed expositions of the structure of the hypostasis soul see Andolfo (1996), Caluori (2015).

[95] The adjectives ὅλη (whole) and πᾶσα (all, entire, every, nothing but) are used to refer alternately to the Soul-Hypostasis (as seen in the first division above, ἡ ὅλη ψυχή: e.g., IV.3 [27] 1.33, 2.55; πᾶσα ψυχή: e.g., III.9 [13] 3.1, VI.7 [38] 12.21) and to the World-Soul (ἡ ὅλη ψυχή: I.1

(ii) Individual or particular souls (ἡ ἑκάστου ψυχή: e.g., III.1 [3] 8.6, IV.3 [27] 6.2, IV.8 [6] 1.47; ἡ ψυχὴ καθέκαστα: e.g., IV.8 [6] 4.1, V.7 [18] 1.4), also referred to as partial souls (ἡ μερικὴ ψυχή or ἐν μέρει ψυχή: e.g., III.9 [13] 3.7, IV.3 [27] 2.42, IV.8 [6] 8.16–17), are such souls as those of particular human beings, animals, and plants. Generally speaking, particular souls share in the World-Soul's work of organizing the cosmos, but their activity focuses on allotted portions of informed matter (i.e., matter with form) rather than on the entirety of the cosmos.[97] Notice also that individual souls are not derived from the World-Soul

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[53] 11.14, II.9 [33] 18.40, IV.3 [27] 4.30; πᾶσα ψυχή: e.g., II.2 [14] 1.39, II.9 [33] 7.11–12, III.3 [48] 1.4). See Helleman-Elgersma (1980, 132–147) for some valuable terminological clarifications on this point. What appears to be a relatively loose usage of these qualifications of soul in Plotinus may depend on the fact that the distinction between Soul-Hypostasis and World-Soul, although maintained in the account at IV.3 [27] 1–8, sometimes is either blurred or at least hard to pinpoint merely on the basis of terminological usage in the *Enneads*. For instance, at II.3 [52] 17.15–16 the World-Soul (here ἡ τοῦ παντός ψυχή) is mentioned immediately after Intellect; and at IV.4 [28] 10.9–15 the World-Soul's (or at least its higher part's) contemplation of Intellect does not seem to differ from the Soul-Hypostasis' contemplation of Intellect. This problem of demarcation of boundaries may in turn be a consequence of another more fundamental, if only occasional, "blurring" of such boundaries, namely, that between the Soul-Hypostasis and Intellect (on which see Armstrong 1967, 250; Blumenthal 1974; Wallis 1995, 82). Patently the issue requires more attention than I can dedicate to it within the limits of this study.

[96] Helleman-Elgersma (1980, 134). In line with Helleman-Elgersma's observation, Reale (2004, VIII, 118, 122), for example, rightly refers to the Soul Hypostasis as "Anima universale."

[97] Wolters (1984, 124) complains that the use of the word "individual" to refer to, say, a rational soul is imprecise, since strictly also the World-Soul is an individual soul. He suggests calling the World-Soul "macrocosmic soul," and what are generally referred to as individual

as its parts. Instead, insofar as both are mixed with a material element and are derived from the Soul-Hypostasis, they are called soul-sisters (see II.9 [33] 18.16, IV.3 [27] 6.13; cf. also IV.3 [27] 2.1–10, 54–59).

Third, there is the distinction between a vegetative soul (ἡ φυτικὴ ψυχή: e.g., II.9 [33] 11.20, IV.4 [24] 22.3, IV.9 [8] 3.11; τὸ φυτικόν: e.g., I.4 [46] 9.27, III.4 [15] 2.23, IV.3 [27] 19.19),[98] a sensitive soul (ἡ αἰσθητικὴ ψυχή: IV.3 [27] 23.22, IV.4 [28] 19.5, IV.9 [8] 1.5; τὸ αἰσθητικόν: e.g., II.9 [33] 13.31, IV.3 [27] 19.11, VI.7 [38] 3.22–30), an appetitive soul (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν: e.g., I.1 [53] 5.7, IV.3 [27] 23.40, IV.4 [28] 22.2; τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν: e.g., III.6 [26] 2.28, IV.3 [27] 28.10–11, IV.7 [2] 8^{5}.23), a spirited soul (τὸ θυμοειδές: e.g., III.6 [26] 4.4, IV.4 [28] 28.65; τὸ θυμούμενον: e.g., I.2 [19] 1.18, IV.4 [28] 28.45; τὸ θυμικόν: e.g., I.1 [53] 5.22 and possibly IV.4 [28] 28.10[99]), an imagining soul (ἡ φανταστικὴ ψυχή: e.g., IV.3 [27] 23.22; τὸ φανταστικόν: e.g., IV.3 [27] 23.32, 30.7, 10), and a rational or reasoning soul (ἡ λογικὴ ψυχή: e.g., I.1 [53] 7.22, IV.3 [27] 3.29, V.9 [5] 7.1, VI.7 [38] 4.13; ἡ λογιζομένη ψυχή: e.g., IV.7 [2] 8^{5}.17, V.1 [10] 11.1; λογιζομένη δύναμις: e.g., V.3 [49] 3.15; τὸ λογιστικόν: e.g., III.6 [26] 2.22, III.8 [30] 5.10, V.3 [49] 3.20; τὸ λογιζόμενον: e.g., I.2 [19] 1.17, III.6 [26] 2.31, 37, IV.3 [27] 19.4). It is evident, however, that the "souls" mentioned within this division are not to be taken as particular souls, but rather as powers, faculties, aspects, or non-discrete parts of soul (see II.3 [52] 17.5–7, IV.3 [27] 23.35–42, IV.4 [28] 28.64–65). As argued by Igal, Plotinus owes much to Aristotle's refection in books II and III of *De anima* for the conceptualization of these powers.[100]

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souls, "microcosmic souls." While Wolters' observation is correct, I will pragmatically disregard his suggestion simply because, given the word usage that has imposed itself in Plotinian scholarship, his designations would be likely to generate some confusion.

[98] Three activities—generation, nutrition, and growth—are characteristically associated with the vegetative soul, hence the distinction of a generative power (τὸ γεννητικόν: e.g., I.1 [53] 8.21, III.6 [26] 4.33, IV.4 [28] 28.50; ἡ γεννητικὴ ψυχή: II.9 [33] 11.20), a nutritive power (τὸ θρεπτικόν: III.6 [26] 4.32, IV.9 [8] 3.23, IV.3 [27] 23.36), and the power for growth or accretive power (τὸ αὐξητικόν: III.6 [26] 4.33, IV.3 [27] 19.20, 23.36).

[99] IV.4 [28] 28.10: HS$_2$ has φυτικοῦ, but the note *ad loc.* records manuscriptural evidence of two alternative readings: θυμικοῦ and μυθικοῦ.

[100] Igal (1979). In addition to this, it might be asked whether the "parts" listed in this division are mere vestiges of Plato's tripartition of the soul as presented in *Republic* IV.436a8–440a7 (whether supplemented or not by *Republic* IX.588b6–589b7, the image of the tripartite creature—many-headed beast, lion, and human being—and by *Phaedrus* 246a3–d2, the image of the charioteer). More specifically, if Plotinus endorses the tripartition of the soul, does he think that it applies to the human soul as such (as Plato himself seems to imply in the *Phaedrus* myth) or only to the human soul in its embodied condition? For a sample of someone endorsing the former position see Igal (1979); cf. also Igal (1982–1998, I, 87). Among those who favor the latter position see Blumenthal (1970, 21–25, 134–140; 1972, especially 348–350), Gerson (1994, 146–147, 155).

Having sketched these general distinctions concerning the third hypostasis, we should immediately notice that for Plotinus an individual soul that identifies itself primarily with its lesser powers (i.e., those that function in relation to the sensible: basically all with the exception of the rational part) is a soul of an inferior kind and is variously called irrational (ἡ ἄλογος ψυχή: e.g., I.8 [51] 4.8, IV.4 [28] 40.23, IV.9 [8] 3.10; τὸ ἄλογον: e.g., I.2 [19] 1.23, IV.3 [27] 19.5, IV.4 [28] 28.64) and passive (τὸ παθητικόν: III.6 [26] 1.19, 4.1, 6, 5.3). By contrast, an individual soul which identifies primarily with its rational powers is viewed as a higher kind of soul (see V.1 [10] 3.17–20; cf. III.3 [48] 3.26–29, III.5 [50] 7.39–42, VI.7 [38] 6.21–36). This higher soul—soul unmingled with body or, perhaps less uncommonly put, soul which does not view bodily concerns as primary—is taken to be the human being itself or truly (IV.7 [2] 1.22: αὐτὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος; III.5 [50] 5.14: ἄνθρωπος ἡ ἀνθρώπου ψυχή; see also I.1 [53] 7.21–22, IV.7 [2] 1.1, 1.20–25, V.3 [49] 4, VI.7 [38] 4–5),[101] our true self, "we ourselves" (ἡμεῖς;[102] cf. IV.4 [28] 18.10–19), "what we most are" (ὅ μάλιστά ἐσμεν: VI.8 [39] 12.5–6). In its purity, the human soul is identical with the subject of one of Plotinus' most peculiar doctrines, the doctrine of an undescended or unfallen part of the individual soul ever connected to the noetic realm and constituting the soul's identity in its purity (see in particular IV.8 [6] 8 and V.1 [10] 10.13–31; see also I.1 [53] 11.10, 13.5–8, II.9 [33] 2.4–9, III.4 [15] 3.21–27, III.8 [30] 6.35–36, IV.3 [27] 12.1–8, IV.7 [2] 10, 13.2–3, VI.4 [22] 14.16–22, VI.7 [38] 5.28–29, 6.9–15; cf. again Plato, *Republic* X.611b9–612a6). Lastly, in this connection it is worth at least mentioning one more item found in the *Enneads*, the Forms or Ideas of individuals or of particulars (τοῦ καθέκαστον ἰδέα; see especially treatise V.7 [18] *On the question whether there are Ideas of particulars*). I will briefly assess both the doctrine of the undescended soul and the notion of Forms of individuals in Chapter 5.

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[101] The background of this view is certainly Plato (especially *Alcibiades I* 129e9–130c4, on which see Aubry 2004, 15–32; see further *Phaedo* 115c2–116a1, *Republic* IX.589a6–b6, *Laws* XII.959a4–b5; cf. *Republic* IX.588c7–10, 590a9–b1, X.611b9–612a6), as well as Aristotle (*De anima* III.5, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.5.1166a16–23, 8.1168b28–1169a3, X.7.1178a2–7; *On the Pythagoreans* fr. 2 = Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* VI.31; *Protrepticus* fr. 6 = Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VII.42.3–4).

[102] The use of the pronoun ἡμεῖς ("we") and the related possessive ἡμέτερος in Plotinus is complex, variously indicating "we" as members of the noetic realm, the higher part of our souls, the individual capable of deliberation and choice, etc. (see Sleeman and Pollet 1980, s.v. ἡμεῖς, for samples of the range of these meanings). Most importantly, the term ἡμεῖς seems to be Plotinus' term of choice for what today we would call the "self," on which see O'Daly (1973), Gerson (1994, 139–151), Aubry (2004, 15–61; 2008), Remes (2007), Tornau (2009).

The ontological complexity of soul is aptly reflected both in Plotinus' terminology and in the soul's presence at several level of Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy, resulting in his description of the hypostasis soul as "one and many" (ἓν καὶ πολλά).[103] At III.4 [15] 3.21–27, for example, the soul is said to be present at different levels of reality, most notably in the intelligible and, through some kind of outflow (ἀπόρροια), in the sensible.

In spite of its complex structure, of which here I introduced only a bare outline, Plotinus claims that the entire reality of soul derives from one single psychic source, namely, the Soul-Hypostasis (see III.3 [48] 1.4–8, III.7 [45] 13.66–67, IV.3 [27] 2.1–10, 54–59, 6.10–15, 8.54–55, IV.4 [28] 10.15, the whole of treatise IV.9 [8], VI.2 [43] 11.11, VI.4 [22] 4.3, 34–45, VI.6 [34] 7.4–7). Bearing in mind the difficulty of drawing a clear boundary between the Soul-Hypostasis and the World-Soul (cf. note 95 above), at least in early treatises and most notably in IV.9 [8],[104] the Soul-Hypostasis is thus understood as the immediate origin of both the World-Soul and of the multiplicity of individual souls that come to act on different portions of matter. What I take this to mean is that life, that is, all psychic manifestations, in spite of its variety, has a single origin which contains life actually, in accordance with the Principle of Prior Actuality. This, to be sure, is true also of noetic life and, ultimately, of all life as participating in the life (or, arch-Life) of the One. Plotinus' basic insight, I take it, is that life cannot be derived from what *completely* lacks life (cf. IV.7 [2] 9.10–13),[105] much like intelligence cannot be derived from what *completely* lacks intelligence, existence from what is *completely* non-existent, and—we might add—much like love cannot be sparked by something which is *completely* undesirable or unlovable.

Closely related to the view that the Soul-Hypostasis is the single source of all psychic manifestations is the issue of the divisibility and indivisibility of soul, on which a brief clarification should suffice for our purposes. Soul is said to be both indivisible (ἀμέριστος) and divisible (μεριστή) in two senses. In a general sense, it is indivisible insofar as it is wholly united to its immediate desideratum, Intellect, but it is divisible insofar as it leaves the intelligible realm in order to mix with body, the latter topic being the main focus of treatise IV.8 [6] of the *Enneads*. In another sense, even when it is mixed with body, soul is said to be indivisible insofar as it gives itself whole to every part of the body, but it is nevertheless divisible insofar as the intrinsically divisible nature of body is unable to receive it indivisibly. In neither sense does psychic divisibility entail divisibility of discrete parts.[106]

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[103] Descriptions of soul as ἓν καὶ πολλά can be found at IV.2 [4] 2.40, 53, V.1 [10] 8.26, VI.2 [43] 4.18 (πολλὰ καὶ ἕν). At VI.2 [43] 21.7, 48 it is Intellect that is called ἓν καὶ πολλά, and at IV.8 [6] 3.10 εἷς καὶ πολλοί, although the more common description of Intellect is one-many (ἓν πολλά: cf. note 58 above).

[104] Cf. Gerson (2018, 523).

[105] Cf. Clark (1999, 277–279).

Before we consider the central issue of the *eros* proper to the third hypostasis, we should ask how Soul (which here means the Soul-Hypostasis, although this already virtually contains all psychic manifestations) comes into existence from Intellect. The description of the derivation of Soul from Intellect is similar to that of the derivation of Intellect from the One. Of the principal passages in which Plotinus describes the genesis of Soul,[107] I will focus on v.1 [10] 7.36–48:[108]

> …for Intellect generates soul, since it is perfect Intellect. For since it was perfect it had to generate, and not be without offspring when it was so great a power. But its offspring could not be better than it in this case either, but had to be a lesser image of it, and in the same way indefinite, but defined by its parent and, so to speak, given a form. And the offspring of Intellect is a rational form and an existing being, that which thinks discursively; it is this that moves round Intellect and is light and trace of Intellect and dependent on it, united to it on one side and so filled with it and enjoying it and sharing in it and thinking, but on the other side in

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[106] On this problem see the two short treatises *On the Essence of the Soul 1–2*, iv.2 [4] and iv.1 [21], with commentaries by Chappuis (2006; 2008) and Gurtler (2015, 299–343); cf. also iv.3 [27] 19–23, with commentary by Dillon and Blumenthal (2015, 256–277), and iv.9 [8], with remarks by Bréhier (1924–1938, iv, 227–230).

[107] Here is a list of some of the main passages in which Plotinus mentions the genesis of Soul, with the main theme of each description given in parentheses: v.1 [10] 3 (Soul as the image of Intellect), v.1 [10] 7.42–43 (Soul as a kind of thought derived from Intellect), v.2 [11] 1.16–18 (Soul as the activity springing from the substance of Intellect), v.3 [49] 9.15–20 (Soul as light from noetic light), vi.2 [43] 22.25–28 (Soul as the activity *from* the essence of Intellect; cf. iv.4 [28] 16.18–19). See also iii.3 [48] 3.21–22, vi.6 [34] 7.4–7, vi.7 [38] 17.37–39.

[108] v.1 [10] 7.36–48: ψυχὴν γὰρ γεννᾷ [37] νοῦς, νοῦς ὢν τέλειος. Καὶ γὰρ τέλειον ὄντα γεννᾶν ἔδει, [38] καὶ μὴ δύναμιν οὖσαν τοσαύτην ἄγονον εἶναι. Κρεῖττον [39] δὲ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν εἶναι οὐδ’ ἐνταῦθα τὸ γεννώμενον, [40] ἀλλ’ ἔλαττον ὂν εἴδωλον εἶναι αὐτοῦ, ἀόριστον μὲν ὡσαύτως, [41] ὁριζόμενον δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ γεννήσαντος καὶ οἷον εἰδοποιούμενον. [42] Νοῦ δὲ γέννημα λόγος τις καὶ ὑπόστασις, τὸ [43] διανοούμενον· τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ περὶ νοῦν κινούμενον καὶ [44] νοῦ φῶς καὶ ἴχνος ἐξηρτημένον ἐκείνου, κατὰ θάτερα μὲν [45] συνηγμένον ἐκείνῳ καὶ ταύτῃ ἀποπιμπλάμενον καὶ ἀπολαῦον [46] καὶ μεταλαμβάνον αὐτοῦ καὶ νοοῦν, κατὰ θάτερα δὲ [47] ἐφαπτόμενον τῶν μετ’ αὐτό, μᾶλλον δὲ γεννῶν καὶ αὐτό, ἃ [48] ψυχῆς ἀνάγκη εἶναι χείρονα. The translation is from ARMSTRONG, minimally modified.

> touch with the things which came after it, or rather itself generating what must necessarily be worse than soul.

This passage was worth citing at length because it clearly highlights some of the major themes of the derivation of a hypostasis from a higher one which I treated earlier. One of these themes is the necessity of generation due to the perfection of the generating hypostasis (lines 36–38). This is a qualified replica of the Principle of Superabundance—qualified because it takes place at the noetic level. In this scheme, Soul is the second activity of Intellect, or the activity from Intellect's essence (cf. IV.4 [28] 16.18–19: ἐνέργεια δευτέρα μετὰ νοῦν ἐστι ψυχή). Another theme is the idea that the generated hypostasis is an image of the generating one (in accordance with the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect), a notion which in our text is coupled with the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect (lines 38–40, and successively 47–48). Still another theme is the double stage of the generated hypostasis of Soul, analogous to that found in the generation of Intellect, though not so explicitly formulated (lines 40–41). A final theme is the double activity of the generated hypostasis (lines 42–48; see also IV.8 [6] 3.27–30, VI.2 [43] 22.28–33). More specifically, the activity *of* Soul's essence is described as a kind of thinking (line 46: νοοῦν), which amounts to a discursive or dianoetic contemplation (line 43: διανοούμενον) of Intellect (lines 42–46), while the activity *from* soul's essence is soul's generation of something inferior to itself (lines 46–48).

A lesser image (V.1 [10] 7.40: ἔλαττον [...] εἴδωλον) of Intellect, Soul is both similar to its generator and different from it. Like Intellect in its incipient state, Soul (i.e., in this precise instance, soul which is logically not yet constituted as the Soul-Hypostasis) is indeterminate (line 40: ἀόριστον) and needs to be given form by it. In this peculiar sense, Soul is the very matter of Intellect—what, if only for the sake of having a terminological parallel with the first stage in the generation of Intellect (i.e., Loving Intellect or intelligible matter), we might refer to as Loving Soul or psychic matter. This matter is given form (line 41: εἰδοποιούμενον) by Intellect as it reverts its contemplative gaze toward its generator.[109] And as with Intellect in relation to the One, so with Soul in relation to Intellect the movement that allows for the emergence of a fully formed hypostasis is one of reversion (ἐπιστροφή, ἐπιστρέφειν) toward the generator, which in this case is Intellect (see V.1 [10] 3.15–25 and particularly V.3 [49] 8.30; cf. also II.2 [14] 3.9, III.4 [15] 1.8–10). Further, just like the One produced Intellect while remaining in itself, so now Intellect produces Soul without leaving itself, or without becoming something other than itself (V.2 [11] 1.16–18; cf. V.1 [10] 11). And finally, just like Intellect was an attempt to replicate the unqualified unity of the One, now too Soul is an attempt to replicate noetic unity at its own level. It is the nature of this psychic replica of Intellect that concerns us here.

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[109] On Soul as matter in relation to Intellect, see II.5 [25] 3.13–14, III.9 [13] 5, V.1 [10] 3.23, V.9 [5] 3.20–37, 4.10–12, VI.7 [38] 28.23, 33.36. On soul as form in relation to what is inanimate, see II.4 [12] 10.31–35, IV.3 [27] 10.13–14, 20.38–39, IV.7 [2] 1.22–25, V.9 [5] 2.16–18, again 3.20–37, 6.20–24, VI.7 [38] 25.24–26, 28.21–22, 33.34–35. In all these references, we find the hylomorphic relation which according to Plotinus characterizes all genesis; this includes the genesis of Intellect from the One, although not literally, for as Pigler (2002, 135 note 1) observes, "le Νοῦς n'est pas, à proprement parler, *matière de l'Un*, *puisque l'Un ne relève pas la dimension eidétique*. Si le Νοῦς était la *matière* de l'Un, il faudrait considérer ce dernier comme ce qui donne forme à cette matière et donc comme étant lui-même

In the passage from V.1 [10] 7 cited above Plotinus states that the proper activity of Soul, or the activity of its essence, is an enjoyment of Intellect and participation in it (V.1 [10] 7. 45–46). Since Intellect as a full-blown hypostasis is essentially thought and Soul proximately derives from Intellect, he reasons that the activity of Soul must also be thought (V.1 [10] 3.12–15)—Thinking Soul, if, once again, we will allow a terminological parallel with the second stage in the generation of Intellect (i.e., Thinking Intellect). However, the thought that pertains to Soul is of a different kind from that of Intellect in at least three respects.[110] First, it is not intuitive but discursive,

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forme, ce qui est proprement impensable," as Plotinus clearly states (VI.7 [38] 17.40–42). Pigler concludes: "Ce n'est pas le cas de l'Âme qui est, au sens plein, *matière de l'Intelligence*." While I generally agree with Pigler, I am not entirely persuaded that Soul is the matter of Intellect "au sens plein," for even Plotinus feels the need to make his statement more precise by qualifying εἰδοποιούμενον with οἷον at V.1 [10] 7.41. After all, information (i.e., the giving and receiving of form) seems to apply primarily to matter, while it is predicated of the relations among the three hypostases only figuratively (cf. Atkinson 1983, 181). Moreover, in each of the relations the manner of information is different: even in the case of the One, it is true that "*l'Un ne relève pas la dimension eidétique*," but as we saw, it is likewise true that the One *does* give what it does not have, and this is precisely Form, the eidetic dimension. Finally, although terminology is no substitute for argument, the differences in the relations among the hypostases are brought out also terminologically by Plotinus: when Intellect is informed by the One by thinking it (or, perhaps less imprecisely, by thinking *about* it) noetically, it is said to be made like the Good, or "boni-form" (ἀγαθοειδής: III.8 [30] 11.15–19, V.3 [49] 16.18–19, V.6 [24] 4.5, 5.13, VI.2 [43] 17.28, VI.7 [38] 15.8–13 and 23–24, 16.5, 18.1–31, 21.2–9; cf. again Plato, *Republic* VI.509a3), and like the One, or "uni-form" (ἑνοειδής: VI.9 [9] 5.26); and when soul is informed by Intellect, it is said to have the form of Intellect (νοοειδής: V.1 [10] 3.23, V.3 [49] 8.49), or to be ἀγαθοειδής via Intellect (I.7 [54] 2.7, I.8 [51] 11.16, V.3 [49] 3.9–11, VI.7 [38] 22.33). Thus, one might well wonder whether there even is such a thing as matter "au sens plein," unless perhaps this "full sense" is to be understood as the "primordial sense," considering that the giving of form by that which *is* Form (i.e., Intellect) occurs first and paradigmatically in a downward direction between Intellect and Soul.

[110] On the general difference between the thinking of Intellect and that of soul, see III.7 [45] 11.20–62, 13.30–44, VI. 2 [43] 21.27–32.

not νόησις but διάνοια (I.1 [53] 9.15–23, III.9 [13] 1.34–37, IV.3 [27] 8.8, V.3 [49] 3.35, 4.9, 17.23, VI.2 [43] 4.23), διανόησις (II.9 [33] 1.45, IV.3 [27] 30.1, IV.4 [28] 6.13, V.8 [31] 6.9, VI.7 [38] 1.27), or διανοεῖσθαι (II.9 [33] 6.21–22, III.9 [13] 1.21–37, IV.3 [27] 29.15–16, V.1 [10] 7.43, V.3 [49] 3.24, 34, 17.22). Plotinus remarks that Soul's possession of the intelligibles is like an unfolding or separation of the contents of Intellect (cf. I.1 [53] 8.7–8: οἷον ἀνειλιγμένα καὶ οἷον κεχωρισμένα); this unfolding occurs in discourse, where Soul sees the intelligibles as if in a mirror (I.4 [46] 10.6–10, IV.3 [27] 30.7–11). Second, the thinking of Soul (and, *a fortiori*, of all souls) does not possess the object of its thinking within itself, but borrows it from without, namely, from Intellect. Plotinus writes about this point at V.3 [49] 6.2–5:[111]

> The thinking is different when it is in soul but is more properly thinking in Intellect. For the soul [we observed] thought itself as belonging to another, but Intellect did so as itself, and as what and who it is, and [it started its thinking] from its own nature and thought by turning back to itself.

Lastly, while the thought of Intellect is permanently actual, the thought of soul implies a passage from potentiality to actuality (V.1 [10] 4.19–25). The passage from potentiality to actuality in the discursive mode of thinking of Soul is not meant to indicate that Soul in its pure state does not possess the contents of Intellect, but only that it possesses them piecemeal: while these contents are constantly available to it, Soul does not have the power to focus on all of them at once, eternally (as Intellect does), but can do so only successively.

The difference between noetic and psychic thinking is what constitutes the alterity of Soul with respect to its generator. For like Intellect, Soul too is a kind of thought, but the unity of this thought is diminished when compared to the pure thought of Intellect. Being discursive, the thought of Soul externalizes and unfolds in succession or transition (διέξοδος, μετάβασις: cf. IV.4 [28] 1.15) what in Intellect is strictly simultaneous. In Plotinus' own words at V.1 [10] 3.6–9:[112]

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[111] V.3 [49] 6.2–5: Νοεῖ οὖν ἄλλως μὲν ἐπὶ ψυχῆς ὄν, ἐπὶ δὲ [3] τοῦ νοῦ κυριώτερον. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴ ἐνόει ἑαυτὴν ὅτι [4] ἄλλου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς ὅτι αὐτὸς καὶ οἷος αὐτὸς καὶ ὅστις καὶ [5] ἐκ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φύσεως καὶ ἐπιστρέφων εἰς αὐτόν. See also III.8 [30] 6.25–26, IV.8 [6] 3.25–26, V.3 [49] 8.8–9, V.6 [24] 4.16–22 (see in particular line 16, where soul is said to have Intellect as borrowed or acquired from the outside, ἐπακτόν; cf. V.3 [49] 3.30–33, VI.2 [43] 8.20).

[112] V.1 [10] 3.6–9: Καίπερ γὰρ οὖσα χρῆμα οἷον [7] ἔδειξεν ὁ λόγος, εἰκών τίς ἐστι νοῦ· οἷον λόγος ὁ ἐν προφορᾷ [8] λόγου τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ, οὕτω τοι καὶ αὐτὴ λόγος νοῦ καὶ ἡ [9] πᾶσα ἐνέργεια καὶ ἣν προΐεται ζωὴν εἰς ἄλλου ὑπόστασιν.

> For, although it [i.e., soul] is a thing of the kind which our discussion has shown it to be, it is an image of Intellect; just as a thought in its utterance is an image of the thought in soul, so soul itself is the expressed thought of Intellect,[113] and its whole activity, and the life which it sends out to establish another reality.

Moreover, since no soul possesses the intelligibles within itself, it must depend on Intellect for thinking; therefore, its thinking is actual only insofar as it is contemplatively directed toward its generator (a predicament in which the Soul-Hypostasis and the World-Soul, but not all individual souls, find themselves permanently, if differently).

This diminished capacity for thought—διάνοια rather than νόησις—is a clear expression of the lesser unity of soul in comparison with that of Intellect. But what about the love pertaining to soul? We saw that Plotinus distinguished two stages in the generation of Intellect from the One, the pre-noetic or loving stage and the thinking stage. As I already hinted above, an analogue of these two stages can be found also in the generation of Soul from Intellect (v.1 [10] 7.38–41). Originally, Soul is a pure indeterminate desire projected toward its generator, a stage which we might call pre-dianoetic or pre-discursive. This desire is a desire to possess its desideratum as undividedly as possible, but in order for this to happen, this unity must be divided further due to Soul's lesser power compared to that of its generator. Therefore, just like Intellect, in order to think the One, divided the latter's unqualified unity *noetically* and in so doing emerged as the second hypostasis, so now Soul, in order to think the superior unity of Intellect, divides it *dianoetically* or *discursively* and constitutes itself as the third hypostasis. Thus, Soul is a kind of intelligence knowing itself not intuitively, but discursively (see vi.2 [43] 6.13–20; cf. also vi.9 [9] 4.3–6). Soul's essence, insofar as it is rational, is still intellection, but one directed outside of itself, and so its ontological status is that of a trace and an image of Intellect in that it possesses unity in an inferior way (v.1 [10] 3.12–15): not one-many, but one and many (vi.2 [43] 6.13–20; cf. note 103 above).

The love of all soul, therefore, is essentially directed toward Intellect. And like all love, psychic *eros*, too, is desire to possess its desideratum (cf. Plato,

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[113] The distinction between inner (ἐνδιάθετος) and expressed (προφορικός) *logos* is explicitly drawn by the Stoics (see the views attributed to Chrysippus in SVF II.135) and is employed by Plotinus as another way to clarify the derivation of soul from Intellect. For parallels of this distinction in the *Enneads* see I.2 [19] 3.28–30, IV.3 [27] 5.8–10, 30.7–11; cf. also IV.8 [6] 5.24–37. For antecedents of the distinction see Plato, *Sophist* 263e3–8; Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I.10.76b24–25. Cf. Graeser (1972, 35).

Symposium 206a6–7), even to the point of wishing to become it. Insofar as soul remains contemplatively directed toward Intellect (and, through Intellect, toward the One), it "possesses" its desideratum; it does so, however, only in the inferior manner of discursivity and, more importantly, as something that remains other than itself. It is here that the complexity of the third hypostasis is reflected in the complexity of its *eros*. For precisely because no manifestation of soul possesses its object of thought within itself but borrows it from Intellect, soul has the additional desire to bring about the harmony it sees in Intellect as something that belongs to itself. In trying to do this, soul, or rather its lower part, directs itself toward what is inferior to it, that which lacks soul: lower matter. Here I refer to the matter informed by (i.e., receiving form from) the lower soul as "lower matter" only to distinguish it from intelligible matter, but in the next section lower matter will usually indicate both cosmic and pre-cosmic matter as I will consider how matter comes into being and is shaped into a cosmos. For the time being, our focus is on the type of loving relation that the lower part of the soul bears to the sensible universe.

In its relation to matter, that is, in its lower part or embodied activities, soul is not only the contemplator of Intellect, but it also performs an organizing function, one by which it attempts to replicate, and thus appropriate, the unity of Intellect by imposing order (i.e., form and life) on that which lacks soul. Accordingly, soul is naturally more than just discursive thought and an erotic relation to Intellect; in addition to this, psychic *eros* is also soul's desire to express itself externally, a desire on which soul acts by organizing lower matter (see IV.7 [2] 13, IV.8 [6] 3.21–28).

Notice that this desire is not accidental to soul; on the contrary, it is rooted in the primordial lack of identity with the object of its thought which is proper to its nature. Therefore, to manifest itself externally is something essential to the nature of soul, which is said to go out to the sensible by a kind of "spontaneous inclination" (ῥοπῇ αὐτεξουσίῳ: IV.8 [6] 5.26), as one might also infer by thinking of this in terms of the Principle of Superabundance. Moreover, the lower (organizing) part of the soul is not another soul but the outer expression of a single reality whose inner reality is the higher (rational) one emerging from Intellect (cf. II.1 [40] 5.5–8, IV.8 [6] 7.18–23, V.2 [11] 1.19–21). As Plotinus points out, the lower soul proceeds from the higher one constantly as life from a superior life (III.8 [30] 5.10–17; cf. VI.7 [38] 31.2–4). This life expresses itself as a vivifying and organizing activity of the lower soul, which in its higher part (or its intellect) remains constantly connected to the contemplative activity of the superior soul. Pigler[114] writes in this regard:

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[114] Pigler (2002, 156).

> Par son essence et son aspect rationnel, la partie supérieure est donc constituée par un désir (ἔφεσις) d'intelligence et de contemplation motivé par l'amour que l'Âme éprouve pour l'Intelligence, amour qui lui vient du supérieur et qui s'exprime en désir d'union avec son générateur. Mais par sa partie inférieure, qui rend raison de sa venue à l'être, l'Âme a pour fonction d'exprimer l'Intelligence, d'en être le *logos*. La partie inférieure est ainsi comme un *logos* extérieur et expansif non immanent à l'Âme. Ce *logos* est ce qui permet l'expansion de l'être, parce qu'il est l'ἔρως de l'Âme…

In short, we may say that the organizing activity of the soul over matter is the lower soul as such, that is, Nature or the World-Soul, and depends on the World-Soul's connection to the contemplation of Intellect by the Soul-Hypostasis (see IV.4 [28] 10.11–13; cf. III.8 [30] 4.15–16, IV.4 [28] 13.3–5, 20.15–16).

In organizing the sensible universe into a cosmos, the lower soul communicates intelligible content to it. In other words, it unfolds, expresses, or temporalizes what in Intellect existed *toto simul*, eternally (I will come back shortly to the concept of time). Soul is thus the product or *logos* of Intellect whereby the life of the One itself is transmitted to the sensible (see V.1 [10] 3.7–9, 6.45–46). Plotinus insists on this point because in his view everything must unfold according to reason (κατὰ λόγον), or according to an original *logos* which has its seat in Intellect, and does not happen by chance (II.3 [52] 13.4, 34, 14.30, 16.5, III.2 [47] 8.30, 11.4, 17.24, 37, 63, 18.15, IV.3 [27] 10.10, 16.6, 16, 17.19, IV.4 [28] 35.10, 20, 39.12; see also III.8 [30] 2.19–34, V.8 [31] 1.24, VI.2 [43] 22.31, VI.9 [9] 1.29). The origin of this rational unfolding lies beyond Intellect, but it too is not a chance event; instead, it is the very self-love of the One conceived as a necessary self-positing act which, while not irrational, transcends all thought, both discursive (soul) and non-discursive (Intellect), as Plotinus argues through treatise VI.8 [39] (see particularly chapters 10 and 14, and 15.28–36). This rational unfolding of reality is the communication of the unity originating in the One (cf. VI.9 [9] 1.20–30); and as I have been arguing, it is at the same time the communication of the self-love Principle, a love which in derived reality takes the form of love *for* the Principle. In descending order, the last guarantor of this unfolding is the World-Soul or Nature, which governs the sensible according to reason, that is, by never losing sight of that which is above it.[115]

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[115] In passing, I should notice that *logos*, like Nature, is not a separate hypostasis between Intellect and soul: see II.9 [33] 1.30–32, V.1 [10] 3.20–22, 6.48–49; cf. Rist (1967, 90–99), Wallis (1995, 68–69), Graeser (1972, 35).

Plotinus refers to this act of transmission of the *logoi* of higher realities to the sensible as illumination (ἔλλαμψις, ἐλλάμπειν),[116] and he describes the active relation of the lower soul to lower matter as a relation of care (ἐπιμέλεια, ἐπιμελεῖσθαι: III.2 [47] 7.24; III.4 [15] 2.1, IV.3 [27] 1.33–37, and 7.12–15, all appealing to Plato's *Phaedrus* 246b6 for support; IV.3 [27] 9.31; IV.7 [2] 8^{1}.6–9, where the appeal is to Plato, *Laws* X.897a1–2). Put differently, for the soul to be embodied means to be engaged in the communication of form and life to that which lacks them by organizing or attending to it: literally by *in-forming* it and *animating* it. This activity of illumination of the sensible and care for it is the peculiar activity of the lower part of the soul, including the individual embodied souls—an activity which, just like the entire process of derivation, seems to be something that has been ongoing *ab aeterno* (IV.3 [27] 9.12–20). Notice, however, that while the World-Soul and individual souls care for the inanimate, they do so in different ways. Most notably, the World-Soul is said to be always in control of and transcending (ὑπερέχειν: IV.3 [27] 4.22, IV.8 [6] 2.32, 8.14) its body because it is constantly linked to the Soul-Hypostasis and, through it, to Intellect. By contrast, individual souls are connected to higher realities only intermittently and for this reason they are not always able to control the portions of matter that have become their bodies. And while individual souls control something impermanent and partial (i.e., portions of matter), the World-Soul controls something permanent and whole (i.e., the entire body of the cosmos). As Rist[117] puts it, "[t]he individual soul governs what is short-lived and therefore partial; the World-Soul governs something that will endure in some sense in its completeness and perfection" (see III.4 [15] 4, IV.3 [27] 3.12, 4.21–37 and chapter 6, IV.8 [6] 4, 7.23–32).

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[116] In reference to soul, Trouillard (1955a, 12–14) divides the activity of illumination in *illumination créatrice* and *illumination ordonnatrice*, respectively belonging to the World-Soul and to individual souls. This classification is conceptually helpful, although Plotinus' word usage is, again, not easy to pin down. The soul's illumination of the sensible cosmos is variously performed by different "subjects," or different manifestations of soul: for example, at I.1 [53] 10.10–11 and VI.4 [22] 3.22 and 15.16, the (individual) soul illumines body with life; at I.1 [53] 11.13–15, the life of beasts is made to derive from the illumination of the World-Soul (ἀπὸ τῆς ὅλης); at VI.7 [38] 7.12, the World-Soul illumines matter. Similarly, the activity of illumination has different recipients: for instance, at II.3 [52] 9.33 it is the World-Soul that illumines souls that are in the body; at II.3 [52] 17.15–16 (cf. also IV.4 [28] 13.4), it is the Soul-Hypostasis that illumines the World-Soul (in fact, the whole of II.3 [52] 17 illustrates the chain of transmission of *logoi* from Intellect down to the sensible, a transmission which starting at the level of soul is called "illumination"), while at III.5 [50] 3.23 the Soul-Hypostasis illumines the heavens as "the *original*, intelligible source of light in the physical heavens" (Wolters 1984, 111); at IV.4 [28] 22.7, 26.27, the heavens irradiate the vegetative power on the earth; at V.3 [49] 8.23, the soul is made intelligent by illumination from Intellect; at VI.9 [9] 7.14–16, the soul is said to be illuminated by the One.

[117] Rist (1967, 116).

Soul is thus understood as the *intermediary* hypostasis, which in communicating the contents and life of Intellect to lower matter gives it order and, in so doing, brings about and maintains the sensible universe (see III.2 [47] 14.1–6, 16.20–31, II.3 [52] 17; cf. also II.3 [52] 8, III.2 [47] 2.15–42, 16.10–58, IV.3 [27] 10, IV.7 [2] 9.5, IV.8 [6] 3.21–30, V.1 [10] 2).[118]

It is in connection with the activity of the lower soul that we may spend a few words regarding Plotinus' view of time and its relation to psychic *eros*. The desire of the lower soul is a power (δύναμις) by which time, Platonically understood as a sensible image of the intelligible, comes into being (see III.7 [45] 11, especially lines 20, 27–28, and 46–47, I.5 [36] 7.15; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 37d5). Otherwise stated, the organizing activity of the lower soul is the temporalization of the higher soul's contemplation of the eternal noetic model, and time is the very form of life of the lower soul, or the modality of its activity (see III.7 [45] 11.30–43).

Pigler writes in this regard: "En se temporalisant, l'Âme inférieure se rend semblable à l'Âme supérieure, *qui n'est pourtant pas temporelle* ; en imitant l'éternité, elle produit quelque chose de différent, un moyen de penser au modèle."[119] This means that the proper realm of the higher soul is not time, but eternity (αἰών), which as we saw in my discussion of the second hypostasis, Plotinus understands as "that which is always" (αἰὼν γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀεὶ ὄντος: III.7 [45] 4.42–43), a complete simultaneity.

Now, it would appear that the claim that the higher soul (as well as the purified individual soul) is not temporal entails a rejection of its discursive or dianoetic nature, for discursivity implies succession, and succession seems to be essentially tied up with time. But Plotinus' position is more nuanced. He argues that every act of intelligence, including the intelligence of individual souls that have come to abide in the intelligible, is timeless (IV.4 [28] 1.12: ἄχρονος πᾶσα νόησις), for which reason in his long discussion of this topic in IV.3 [27] 24–IV.4 [28] 17 he denies that there should be any memory in it. In particular, he maintains that not only the Soul-Hypostasis, but also the World-Soul and, strictly, even individual souls in their higher parts are not in time (IV.4 [28] 15[120]). What is in time are only the affections and actions of embodied souls. The reason for this is that time is ontologically posterior to the World-Soul, which generates it. The proper realm of all soul insofar as it is soul, therefore, is not time but timelessness. But then, if confusion is to be avoided, timelessness must be distinguished from eternity, and the discursivity that belongs to all soul must be divided in temporal discursivity and timeless (i.e., non-temporal, or a-temporal) discursivity.

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[118] Plotinus remarks that without body the soul would be wholly in the intelligible (IV.5 [29] 1.5–6, IV.7 [2] 10.19–21) and fully in control of itself (III.1 [3] 8.9–11).

[119] Cf. Pigler (2002, 159; my emphasis).

[120] See the comments on this passage in Dillon and Blumenthal (2015, 363–365).

The first distinction is between eternity (i.e., the proper way of being of Intellect which I introduced in the previous section) and timelessness (i.e., the proper way of being of soul in its pure state). On the one hand, Intellect always is and thinks the intelligibles all at once without interval (ἀδιάστατος: see I.5 [36] 7.24–30, III.7 [45] 2.31–34, 3.15, 37, 6.35, 11.53, 13.63; cf. also V.8 [31] 9.20, VI.5 [23] 5.7, 10.40, 11.1). On the other hand, soul in its pure state can think all the intelligibles (and in fact it does so according to Plotinus, since all are readily available to it), but, as I pointed out earlier, it thinks them only as other than itself and only in a kind of process of unfolding and separation.

The second distinction concerns the different kinds of discursivity that belong to pure soul and to soul in its embodied operations respectively. While Plotinus does not employ these expressions, for ease of reference let us call the discursivity of pure soul, timeless discursivity (cf. IV.4 [28] 11–17, V.8 [31] 7–8; also II.3 [52] 17.11); and let us call the discursivity of soul in its embodied operations, temporal discursivity (cf. V.8 [31] 6–7, VI.2 [42] 21.27–37, VI.7 [38] 1). Timeless and temporal discursivity differ in two ways: first and more fundamentally, with regard to the nature of the main feature of all discursivity, succession; second, with regard to their respective modality of accessing intelligible content.

The succession that is proper to temporal discursivity is the ordinary experience of the prior and the posterior in time. Differing from this is the succession of timeless discursivity, which is not a succession of 'before' and 'after', but one of arrangement or order (τάξει: IV.4 [28] 1.30), in which what is ordered is grasped simultaneously and becomes prior and posterior in time only when it is carried out in the sensible cosmos. Plotinus explains at IV.4 [28] 1.26–31:[121]

> And, as the prior and the subsequent in the species-forms are not temporal, so neither will the soul make its acts of intelligence of the prior and

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[121] IV.4 [28] 1.26–31: Τὸ [27] δὲ πρότερον καὶ τὸ ὕστερον ἐν τοῖς εἴδεσιν οὐ χρόνῳ ὂν [28] οὐδὲ τὴν νόησιν τοῦ προτέρου καὶ ὑστέρου χρόνῳ ποιήσει· [29] ἔστι γὰρ καὶ τάξει, οἱονεὶ φυτοῦ ἡ τάξις ἐκ ῥιζῶν ἀρξαμένη [30] ἕως εἰς τὸ ἄνω τῷ θεωμένῳ οὐκ ἔχει ἄλλως ἢ τάξει [31] τὸ πρότερον καὶ τὸ ὕστερον ἅμα τὸ πᾶν θεωμένῳ. Cf. IV.3 [27] 10.2–9; also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.11.1018b26–29.

> the subsequent in temporal sequence. For there is also the prior and the subsequent in order, as in a plant the order which begins from the roots and extends to the topmost point does not have for the observer the prior and the subsequent in any other way than in order, since he observes the whole plant at once.

Thus, when temporal coordinates are predicated of pure soul, what they mean is not temporal succession but rather separation (τὸ χωρίς), or an intensified otherness (ἑτερότης), as contrasted with the eternity of noetic intuition (cf. IV.4 [28] 16.1–16, V.9 [5] 8.19–22).

The second difference between timeless and temporal discursivity concerns the ways in which pure soul and soul in its embodied operations access intelligible content. On the one hand, temporal discursivity occurs through reasoning (λογισμός, λογίζεσθαι: see especially IV.3 [27] 18.1–13; cf. also I.1 [53] 7.21–23, IV.4 [28] 28.44, IV.8 [6] 1.8, V.1 [10] 11.1–7, V.3 [49] 3.14–45, 8.46, VI.7 [38] 3.5–6, VI.9 [9] 5.9), inference (συλλογισμός: I.3 [20] 4.19, IV.4 [28] 5.6, 6.13, IV.5 [29] 4.45, V.8 [31] 7.40, VI.5 [23] 2.18.), and deliberation (βούλευσις, βουλεύεσθαι: IV.4 [28] 11.4–5, IV.8 [6] 8.16, V.8 [31] 6.9, 7.38, 12.21, VI.7 [38] 3.4, VI.8 [39] 6.12.), and is often expressed in language through debate (διαλέγεσθαι: IV.3 [27] 18.16, IV.4 [28] 5.22; διαλογίζεσθαι, διαλογισμός: V.3 [49] 3.3, VI.9 [9] 10.6). Timeless discursivity, by contrast, is free of all this. For although it is true that the contents of Intellect are neither completely present at once to the Soul-Hypostasis, the World-Soul, and the pure individual soul, nor identical with any of them, the same contents are nonetheless wholly and effortlessly (ἀπόνως: II.9 [33] 18.17, IV.3 [27] 4.26, 10.26, IV.8 [6] 8.14) available to them without any need of deliberation and inferential reasoning. This is not the case for the mode of temporal discursivity, which, besides being successive, requires the additional effort of inferential reasoning and deliberation in order to access the contents of Intellect—an access which, due to the ordinarily partial success of the effort by which it is pursued, remains intermittent.[122]

Timeless discursivity may be divided further in primary timeless discursivity (i.e., the discursivity of the Soul-Hypostasis) and derivative timeless discursivity (i.e., the discursivity of a fully purified individual soul and of the World-Soul). As these labels should indicate, the difference consists in the fact that derivative timeless discursivity is dependent upon primary discursivity (as one may infer from, e.g., III.5 [50] 3.38), while primary timeless discursivity is the very activity through which Soul constitutes itself as the third hypostasis by erotically reverting toward its generator and thus dianoetically replicating the noetic unity of Intellect.

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[122] For a helpful treatment of this point see Emilsson (2007, 181–185).

If I am correct about these distinctions, there is an obvious parallel between them and the nature of the *eros* of the respective entities to which they apply. In fact, one can think of these distinctions as one more expression of the difference in the intensity of unity and of love found at each level of Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy. Thus, as we saw in the previous section, eternity, the mode of being of Intellect, can be interpreted as the friendship that characterizes the intelligibles in Intellect, and the very expression of noetic *eros*. Similarly, timelessness is another way to indicate the nature of the *eros* that characterizes the Soul-Hypostasis (and, in different ways, the World-Soul and purified individual souls), permanently directed toward Intellect in loving contemplation, but also unable to contemplate it in the noetic mode of eternity because the object of its contemplation is other than itself. Thus, soul permanently unfolds the contents of Intellect according to its own mode of being—dianoetically or discursively. And as soul makes for itself a discursive replica of the unity of Intellect, it mirrors eternity in time, which is the mode of being of the sensible cosmos, a dispersion of unity which, however, is not absolute, for the presence of soul holds the cosmos and its parts together in a universal relation of sympathy. This relation of sympathy, in turn, constitutes the love at work in the sensible cosmos, as I will explain in the next section.

To conclude, the love that belongs to the third hypostasis has its peculiarity in the fact that it is naturally oriented in two directions. On the one hand the Soul-Hypostasis (and, secondarily, the intellect of the World-Soul) is directed toward Intellect, whose unity it permanently contemplates. On the other hand, because the object of this contemplation remains constantly other than the contemplator, soul in its lower part (i.e., Nature and the individual souls in their embodied operations) directs its love, in the form of illumination and care, toward the sensible cosmos, which it generates and possesses as a temporal replica of the eternity of Intellect. We thus come to the last stage in the process of derivation of all reality from the One: matter.

4 Hyletic *Eros*: Matter as the Last Stage of Derivation, Inability of Reversion, and Evil

At the outset of my brief discussion, it will be useful to provide a classification of the different entities which may variously be designated as matter (ὕλη) in Plotinus' universe. This classification is at the same time a summation of some of my conclusions about the topic and an introduction of the concepts that

I will consider in this section.[123] In order of decreasing unity and erotic proximity to the One, I will distinguish five types of matter, or five entities which may be designated with the term "matter" (variously qualified) in the *Enneads*.

(i) First we have *intelligible matter* (or the indeterminate dyad), that is, the primary otherness directly issuing from the One and immediately erotically directed toward the One. This is the matter which constitutes the first stage or phase of Intellect (i.e., Loving Intellect); we might also refer to it as *pre-hypostatic noetic matter*.

(ii) Less appropriately, intelligible matter is also the erotically charged—though with an *eros* of diminished intensity—remainder that is left after Intellect has constituted itself as a full hypostasis. This remainder is the first stage of soul, what we might refer to as *pre-hypostatic psychic matter* (i.e., Loving Soul as a psychic analogue of Loving Intellect, as we saw in my discussion of the generation of soul).

(iii) Similarly, after soul has emerged as a fully formed hypostasis, we have *the last remainder of intelligible matter*, which is unable to revert and become a full-blown hypostasis, namely, the World-Soul (i.e., Nature or the lower soul).

Finally, we have *lower matter* (as distinguished from intelligible or higher matter), which comprises (iv) *sensible* or *cosmic matter* (or body) and (v) *pre-cosmic matter* (or matter *tout court*). Sensible matter is pre-cosmic matter after this has been informed by the lower soul, bearing in mind that "after" and "pre-" do not have temporal connotations.

What distinguishes higher or intelligible matter—(i), (ii), and (iii) (i.e., pre-hypostatic noetic matter, pre-hypostatic psychic matter, and the remainder of intelligible matter which is the World-Soul or Nature)—from (v) (i.e., pre-cosmic matter) is that while higher matter *by itself* is capable of reversion toward its generator, lower matter is not, and so it needs an external agent (i.e., soul) to inform it and turn it into (iv) (i.e., cosmic or sensible matter). The difference between (i), (ii), and (iii) is that although in a sense they are all intelligible matter, only (i) and (ii) are intense enough to constitute themselves as levels of reality, or hypostases, possessing their desideratum according to their proper mode of existence, while (iii) lacks the intensity to constitute itself as such a level of reality, and thus is always a desire that is not in possession of its desideratum. Alternately, the reversion of (iii), the last remainder of intelligible matter which amounts to the World-Soul, must be considered as at least partial, in the sense that although the World-Soul never emerges as a fully formed hypostasis in its own right, it does remain permanently linked to the

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[123] For an analogous classification see Pigler (2002, 201 note 2, 214–225, 227 note 2).

Soul-Hypostasis' contemplation of Intellect. As O'Brien[124] remarks, the differences between the first two hypostases, the One and Intellect, and soul are not limited to the respective ways in which they generate, but

> continue *ex parte prolis*. Intellect, Soul, and intelligible matter, when they are generated, turn back of their own accord toward the principle from which they have issued, and intelligible matter, when it does this, 'is defined' (V.2 [11] 1.9–13 and 19–20; II.4 [12] 5.33–35). None of this is true of the matter of the sensible world.

Notice also that pre-cosmic and cosmic matter are not two kinds of matter, but rather the same matter respectively taken "before" and "after" this has been "illuminated" by the ordering activity of the lower soul. And as it is often the case in Plotinus' universe, here too priority and posteriority are to be taken as logical rather than chronological.

In short, we may say that Plotinus recognizes two primary kinds of matter, *higher* or *intelligible*, which strictly is identical with (i), and has (ii) and (iii) as remainders of considerably different decreasing intensity, and *lower* or *sensible*, which strictly is identical with (iv) but has (v) as its logically necessary condition. In what follows I will refer to (v) simply as matter, leaving it up to the context or to some explicit indication to signal those instances in which what is meant is (iv) or the whole of lower matter.

In approaching the issue of the erotic status of matter, we must be mindful of a number of questions related to its origin and nature, most notably: Does Plotinus think that matter is generated or not? If it is not generated, can we still consistently refer to the One as the Principle of *all* reality? If, conversely, matter is generated, what generates it, why, and how? Does matter participate in higher hypostases? And lastly, why does Plotinus associate it so closely with evil? These questions have not been given unanimous answers by those who have investigated the subject, and even a mere summary of the literature on the problem would provide enough material for a thick monograph. I will limit my exposition in this section to a bare sketch of some of the main alternatives offered in reply to these questions and to a general statement of my tentative conclusions on the issue in relation to love, our main topic. I will begin with the question of the origin or generation of matter.

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[124] O'Brien (1999a, 183).

4.1 *The Question of the Generation of Matter*

Plotinus states that divine things (τὰ θεῖα: V.1 [10] 7.49) or real beings (τὰ ὄντα: IV.4 [28] 13.20), to wit, the three hypostases, end at soul: what are posterior to them in his hierarchy are said to be imitations (τὰ μιμήματα: IV.4 [28] 13.22). The question here is not about the ontological status of this imitation, which as we saw in the previous section for Plotinus exists thanks to an act of care and illumination of soul on matter; it is rather about the origin of that which is illuminated and informed: pre-cosmic matter. The alternative around which revolves much of the controversy surrounding this problem is stated in an early text of the *Enneads*, IV.8 [6] 6.18–23 (the emphasis in the translation is mine):[125]

> The nature of matter, then, *either existed for ever*, and it is impossible for it, since it existed, not to participate in that which grants all things as much good as each one of them can take; *or else its coming into being* was a necessary consequence of the causes before it, and not even so was it required to be separate because that which gave it existence as a kind of gracious gift became stationary through a lack of power before it came to it.

Before I take into account some of the major views about the generation of what in the classification given above I called pre-cosmic matter, condition of the sensible cosmos, it will be useful to supplement this passage with three other passages from the *Enneads* that are the object of some controversy. I will be referring constantly to these four texts as I report the views of other authors on the subject.

The *first* text is the one I just cited, IV.8 [6] 6.18–23. The *second* text is III.4 [15] 1, particularly lines 5–7 and 14–16, where the generation of matter is stated explicitly.[126] At lines 5–7, Plotinus writes about the soul's "power of growth which extends also to plants" (line 3: φύσιν καὶ μέχρι φυτῶν): "Does this power of growth, then, produce nothing? It produces a thing altogether different from itself; for after it there is no life, but what is produced is lifeless." Plotinus calls this lifeless product "absolute indefiniteness" (lines 11–12: ἀοριστίαν […] παντελῆ; line 13: πάντη ἀόριστον) and goes on to write about it: "When it is perfected it becomes a body, receiving the form appropriate to its potentiality, a receptacle for that which produced it and brought it to maturity" (lines 14–16, perhaps an allusion to the receptacle of Plato's *Timaeus*).

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[125] IV.8 [6] 6.18–23: Εἴτ' οὖν ἦν ἀεὶ ἡ τῆς ὕλης φύσις, οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν [19] αὐτὴν μὴ μετασχεῖν οὖσαν τοῦ πᾶσι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καθόσον [20] δύναται ἕκαστον χορηγοῦντος· εἴτ' ἠκολούθησεν ἐξ [21] ἀνάγκης ἡ γένεσις αὐτῆς τοῖς πρὸ αὐτῆς αἰτίοις, οὐδ' ὧς [22] ἔδει χωρὶς εἶναι, ἀδυναμίᾳ πρὶν εἰς αὐτὴν ἐλθεῖν στάντος [23] τοῦ καὶ τὸ εἶναι οἷον ἐν χάριτι δόντος.

[126] III.4 [15] 1.5–7, 14–16: Αὕτη [6] μὲν οὖν οὐδὲν γεννᾷ; Γεννᾷ πάντη ἕτερον αὑτῆς· οὐκέτι [7] γὰρ ζωὴ μετὰ ταύτην, ἀλλὰ τὸ γεννώμενον ἄζων. [...] [14] Τελειούμενον δὲ γίνεται [15] σῶμα μορφὴν λαβὸν τὴν τῇ δυνάμει πρόσφορον, ὑποδοχὴ [16] τοῦ γεννήσαντος καὶ ἐκθρέψαντος... The translation is by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified.

The *third* text is III.9 [13] 3.7–16:[127]

> The partial soul, then, is illuminated when it goes towards that which is before it—for then it meets reality—but when it goes towards what comes after it, it goes towards non-existence. But it does this, when it goes towards itself, for, wishing to be directed towards itself it makes an image of itself, the non-existent, as if walking on emptiness and becoming more indefinite; and the indefinite image of this is in every way dark; for it is altogether without reason and unintelligent and stands far removed from reality. [But if the soul goes] towards the intermediate region it is in its own world, but when it looks at the image again, as it were directing its attention to it a second time, it forms it and goes into it rejoicing.

The *fourth* and final text is I.8 [51] 14.51–54:[128]

> For if the soul itself generated matter, being affected in some way, and if it associated with it and became evil, the cause was the presence of matter;

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[127] III.9 [13] 3.7–16: Φωτίζεται μὲν οὖν ἡ μερικὴ [8] πρὸς τὸ πρὸ αὐτῆς φερομένη—ὄντι γὰρ ἐντυγχάνει—εἰς δὲ [9] τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν. Τοῦτο δὲ ποιεῖ, ὅταν πρὸς [10] αὑτήν πρὸς αὑτὴν γὰρ βουλομένη τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν ποιεῖ [11] εἴδωλον αὑτῆς, τὸ μὴ ὄν, οἷον κενεμβατοῦσα καὶ ἀορισ- [12] τοτέρα γινομένη· καὶ τούτου τὸ εἴδωλον τὸ ἀόριστον [13] πάντη σκοτεινόν· ἄλογον γὰρ καὶ ἀνόητον πάντη καὶ πολὺ [14] τοῦ ὄντος ἀποστατοῦν. Εἰς δὲ τὸ μεταξύ ἐστιν ἐν τῷ [15] οἰκείῳ, πάλιν δὲ ἰδοῦσα οἷον δευτέρᾳ προσβολῇ τὸ εἴδωλον [16] ἐμόρφωσε καὶ ἡσθεῖσα ἔρχεται εἰς αὐτό. Again, the translation is ARMSTRONG'S, slightly modified. In particular, I follow Igal (1982–1998) in translating τὸ μεταξύ at line 14 with "the intermediate region" (in contrast with ARMSTRONG: "the time between"). Igal (1982–1998, II, 270 note 33) comments: "La región intermedia es la región del Alma, limítrofe del mundo inteligible y del sensible" (cf. IV.4 [28] 3.11–12).

[128] I.8 [51] 14.51–54: καὶ γὰρ εἰ αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ τὴν ὕλην ἐγέννησε [52] παθοῦσα, καὶ εἰ ἐκοινώνησεν αὐτῇ καὶ ἐγένετο κακή, [53] ἡ ὕλη αἰτία παροῦσα· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγένετο εἰς αὐτὴν μὴ τῇ [54] παρουσίᾳ αὐτῆς τὴν γένεσιν λαβοῦσα. In my translation I follow again Igal (1982–1998): "Porque si bien es verdad que el alma misma engendró la materia como resultado de alguna pasión, y si bien es verdad que se asoció con ella y se hizo mala, la causa está en la presencia de la materia. Porque el alma no se habría encarnado en la materia si no fuera porque por la presencia de ésta tomó ocasión de encarnarse." Cf. also O'Meara (1999b), Gerson (2018).

> for [the soul] would not have come to it unless its presence had given [the soul] the occasion to come to be [in it].

The alternative presented in iv.8 [6] 6.18–23, our first text, is generally taken to mean that Plotinus thinks either that matter existed always and independently (thus not owing its existence to the One) or that it is generated (thus ultimately depending on the One for its existence).[129] The major supporter of the first (and less popular) hypothesis—the hypothesis that according to Plotinus matter is ungenerated—is H.-R. Schwyzer.[130] By contrast, those who endorse the hypothesis that for Plotinus matter is generated,[131] though often disagreeing on other related issues, think that support for their views can be found in a number of passages, chief of which are III.4 [15] 1[132] and III.9 [13] 3, partially cited above as our second and third text.

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[129] Authors who variously argue that matter is (or may be) generated in Plotinus provide a number of important qualifications (which they do not all share) on how we should understand generation in the alternative of iv.8 [6] 6.18–23. Three such qualifications are worth mentioning.

(1) Bréhier (1961, 205–207) thinks that Plotinus outlines the alternative without taking a side, and holding rather a double viewpoint. Bréhier's position on the generation of matter is part of a broader reading of matter in Plotinus, whose views he understands as characterized by a constant conflict of perspectives on its status, namely, a conception of matter both as an active principle of evil and as mere appearance and pure negativity.

(2) Having expressly criticized Bréhier's reading, Rist (1967, 118–119; also 1961, 157–158) goes on to argue that the alternative is not between whether matter is generated (and so ultimately dependent on the One) or ungenerated (and so independent of the One), but between whether it is generated temporally or a-temporally. He argues that Plotinus' claim is that matter was not created in time; but if it had been, "not even so" (οὐδ᾽ ὥς: iv.8 [6] 6.21) would it be independent of the One for its existence. He concludes that matter is the last product in the process of derivation and is produced by the World-Soul. In this connection, Igal (1982–1998, ii, 539 note 45), commenting on the clause Εἴτ᾽ οὖν ἦν ἀεὶ ἡ τῆς ὕλης φύσις at iv.8 [6] 6.18, thinks that the first alternative—that matter always existed—is based on a literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* (cf. Chapter 1 note 7), while the second one—that matter is a necessary consequence of causes prior to it—is Plotinus' own philosophical interpretation of the state of affairs, through which he also rejects the literal reading of the *Timaeus* that he already attacked earlier in the treatise (see iv.8 [6] 4.35–42, 5.10–16, and notes *ad loc.* in Igal 1982–1998). Neither Rist nor Igal deny that matter is generated, therefore, but only that, whatever generation might entail, it does not make matter independent of the One or altogether separated from it (cf. ii.9 [33] 3.17–21). See also P. Henry (1969, lvi–lvii), who calls Plotinus a relaxed dualist. Henry does not deny that matter may have an origin (cf. his remarks in Dörrie 1960, 236–237), but only echoes Plotinus in saying that it is not entirely separated from the Good and somehow participates in it.

(3) Writing about the different types of matter found in the *Enneads*, O'Brien (e.g., 1981; 1991, 21–25) remarks that when Plotinus speaks of "non-participating" matter, he has the matter of the sensible world in mind, while when he speaks of matter that "is" and cannot not participate, he is talking about intelligible matter. Both kinds are generated: the intelligible, by otherness and the primal movement; the sensible, by the partial soul (i.e., the vegetative principle which comes to be in plants mentioned in iii.4 [15] 1.3). For a brief critique of these claims by O'Brien, see Narbonne (e.g, 1993, 143–144); see also Pigler (2002, 212–213), who is otherwise sympathetic to O'Brien's thesis that matter is generated by the lower soul.

What might be called a skeptical position, distancing itself from both a positive view (i.e., matter is generated) and a negative one (i.e., matter is not generated), is that expressed by J.-M. Narbonne, who develops Bréhier's insight (see note 129 above) in an original direction.[133] On the one hand, Narbonne admits that in several passages Plotinus presents matter as having the status of a derived entity (although not the product of a generation by a higher reality in any strict sense), and hence not at variance with his single-source metaphysics of derivation.[134] On the other hand, when matter is considered identical with evil and the source of corruption for the soul (as we shall see later in this section), its status is that of a force essentially antithetic to the Good, from which one would be led to presume that its existence cannot be the result of the work of any higher, intelligible reality. For this reason, Narbonne raises serious doubts about the generation of matter in Plotinus. He argues that the *Enneads* do not afford full clarity on the issue[135] and that a careful analysis of the passages in which what he takes to be a merely *alleged* generation of matter is described shows that these texts are inconclusive.[136] He writes: "Du déni pur et simple à l'affirmation inconditionné de l'engendrement de la matière, l'éventail est vaste. Les écrits de Plotin ont pu susciter un tel éventail de solutions et un telle confusion que parce qu'il sont eux-mêmes, sur ce point particulier, hésitants et confus."[137]

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[130] Schwyzer (1973). Much of Schwyzer's argument against the generation of matter hinges on an interpretation of the protasis of the crucial passage of I.8 [51] 14.51–54 as *irrealis* (so rendered by ARMSTRONG). Another important point made by Schwyzer as he argues that matter is not generated in the *Enneads* concerns our third text, III.9 [13] 3.7–16. In his view this passage describes, not the generation of matter, but of body, that is, the process by which soul gives form to a preexisting (i.e., ungenerated) formlessness or indefiniteness (see especially Schwyzer 1973, 275–276). Authors who consider matter ungenerated include Pistorius (1952, 119), Armstrong (1954, 277; but Armstrong 1967, 256 will modify his views), and Benz (1990, 110–111, 165). For a critique of Schwyzer's overall position see O'Brien (1991, 27–41; 1993, 61–68); cf. also Corrigan (1986, 172–176).

[131] Ficino (in Creuzer 1835, I, 134, right column), in his commentary to I.8 [51] 14, already cautiously ("probabile est") voiced the view that in the *Enneads* matter is said to be generated: "Memento, Plotinum et hic et alibi nobis innuere, materiam a natura, id est, ab infima virtute animae generari." Notable modern supporters of the generation thesis, perhaps influenced by Ficino's views (cf. Narbonne 2007b, 153–154), include: Trouillard (1955a, 15), Armstrong (1967, 256; but as I noticed Armstrong 1954, 277 thought otherwise), Rist (see note 129 above), O'Brien (1971; 1981; 1991, particularly 11 and 15–25; 1993, particularly 19–27; 1999a; 1999b; cf. again note 129 above), Corrigan (1986; 1996, 258–263), Igal (see once more note 129), O'Meara (1993, 78; and, in the context of the question of matter as evil, 1999b, 30–39), and Pigler (2002, 201–237, especially 202–207); see also Blumenthal (1971, 1 note 2), Gerson (1994, 114), Reale (2004, VIII, 131–132), Phillips (2009).

[132] According to Corrigan (1986, 168; 1996, 258–259; 2005, 45), III.4 [15] 1 is the only positive unambiguous statement about the generation of matter in the *Enneads*, the ambiguous passages being II.3 [52] 18.10–13, 17.21–25, III.9 [13] 3, IV.3 [27] 9.20–27, V.2 [11] 1.18–27; cf. also V.2 [11] 2.29–31.

[133] Narbonne (1993, 139–141).

[134] E.g., Narbonne (1993, 142; 2001, 42–47; 2006b, 45; 2007b, 162–163; 2014, 231).

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[135] Narbonne (1993; 2001, 113–147; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2009). Taking a different approach, Carroll (2002) argues that Plotinus held three different positions on the generation of matter during his philosophical career, the first of which we may call skeptical (i.e., the status of matter in the cosmos is unclear), the second monistic (i.e., matter ultimately derives from the One), and the third dualistic (i.e., matter is an independent principle). Whatever its merits, Carroll's analysis seems to presuppose the kind of developmental approach to Plotinus's philosophy voiced by Heinemann (1921, especially 174–176 on intelligible matter), an approach which has been seriously criticized (see Narbonne 1993, 48–50, 101–103 for a sketch of the problem and a critical assessment of Heinemann's views).

[136] In the order in which Narbonne (1993, 139–169) treats them, these texts are: IV.8 [6] 6, IV.7 [2] 3, II.4 [12], III.4 [15] 1, IV.4 [28] 13.17–20 and 22–23, III.8 [30] 2, V.8 [31] 2, VI.7 [38] 11, 27.11–13, 32.9–12, 33.30–38, VI.2 [43] 22, III.2 [47] 2, 12.1–2, III.3 [48] 1.4–7; III.9 [13] 3. As we can see, Narbonne excludes I.8 [51] 14.51–54, our fourth text, from this list of passages and only points out that treatise I.8 [51] is chronologically the first place where Plotinus posits the generation of matter by soul. In later publications Narbonne modifies his stance and argues that this text does not even report Plotinus' own position but is an allusion to a Gnostic view which Plotinus had already rejected in II.9 [33] 12 (Narbonne 2006b; 2007a; 2007b, especially 123–141; 2009, 74). Narbonne claims that if matter (which is identified with radical evil) ever came into existence, this event never occurred as a process of generation or production from higher realities, but as some kind of "by-product" (Narbonne 2007a, 85) or a "collateral damage" (Narbonne 2009, 73) of the overall process of derivation. Higher realities are thus thought to be innocent of the existence of matter; in fact, they do not generate it but rather curb its corrupting influence (cf. I.8 [51] 15). Finally, Narbonne (2007b, 135–137; 2009) argues that what soul produces argues that what soul produces—since as a complete reality soul is by nature productive—is not matter but a place (τόπος) for the body on which it exercises its ordering activity (cf. IV.3 [27] 9.15–27).

[137] Narbonne (2001, 145). Notice that the question here is whether matter is generated, not whether the One has a beneficial influence over the sensible world, of which matter is a neccessary factor. As we just saw, for Narbonne a definitive answer to the former question is not given in the *Enneads*. The answer to the latter question, by contrast, is both positive and independent of how one answers the former, that is: whether matter is generated or not, the One *does* have a beneficial influence over the sensible universe. "En d'autres termes, *Plotin nous apprend ici que la question de la génération de la matière n'affecte en rien sa théodicée*, que les deux hypothèses restent interchangeables, et n'ont, au fond, aucune

What seems beyond dispute is that even if matter is said to be generated in Plotinus, generation ought to be understood in non-temporal terms.[138] In other words, there never was a moment in which matter did not exist, for if matter, just like everything else (though not in the same way), ultimately derives from the One by an activity that has no temporal beginning, then matter itself has no temporal beginning. In this sense, Plotinus may be understood as the epitome of the Greek tradition, in which the cosmos itself is considered eternal.[139] So, to claim that matter is generated does not mean that it has a temporal beginning, but that it depends, both for its information and for its existence, directly on its generator (and ultimately on the One), and in this precise sense it must be understood as something *derived*. Therefore, generation here should not be understood as a chronological affair, but as derivation, that is, as the radical inability, on the part of all that is generated (γενητός), to maintain itself in existence without a prior principle.[140] We might add in passing that in this strict sense the only ungenerated (ἀγένητος, ἀγέννητος) reality is the One (V.4 [7] 1.18–19; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 245d1–3).

As I anticipated, a controversy within the controversy concerns the question of the identity of the generator of matter and that of the modality of this generative act. In regard to the first problem—the identity of the generator—those who agree that matter is generated generally also agree that the generator is soul,[141] but they may disagree on whether this means simply the partial soul mentioned at III.9 [13] 3.7 and III.4 [15] 1.3,[142] the lower soul (i.e., the

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pertinence dès lors qu'il s'agit de caractériser l'activité bienfaitrice de l'Un dan la constitution générale du monde" (Narbonne 1993, 140).

[138] See Rist (1961, 157–158; 1967, 118–119; cf. note 129 above), Pigler (2002, 206, 235).

[139] See Moreau (1970, 27–28), O'Meara (1993, 77–78). In this context, eternity obviously means infinity of time, thus differing essentially from the eternity that is the proper way of being of Intellect introduced earlier.

[140] See II.9 [33] 3.12–21, II.4 [12] 5.24–29; cf. also VI.8 [39] 21.20–21. These meanings of γενητός and ἀγένητος (and of the related verbs γεννάω and γίγνομαι) are brought out clearly by O'Brien (1991, 35–38; 1993, 61–64) in his critique of Schwyzer (1973).

[141] An exception is Phillips (2009), who in a pervasive critique of O'Brien argues that matter is certainly said to be generated in the *Enneads*, but the identity of the generator is far from clear. In fact, he thinks that the passages on which O'Brien (see the next note for references) comments to prove that the generator of matter is the "partial soul" or the soul "which comes to be in plants" (i.e., III.4 [15] 1 and III.9 [13] 3.7–16) speak, not of the generation of matter, but of what he calls the "soul-trace" or "soul-image," that is, the lowest level of soul—lower even than vegetation (cf. Phillips 2009, 122–133)—which elsewhere seems to be identified with the παθητικόν (see Igal 1979, 324–329; 1982–1998, I, 86–87). O'Brien replies to Phillips in a three-part article (O'Brien 2011a; 2011b; 2012).

[142] O'Brien (1991, 25; 1993, 19–35; 1999a, 181–182).

World-Soul or Nature),[143] or, in light of the expression αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ at I.8 [51] 14.51, soul as including also the Soul-Hypostasis.[144]

Concerning the mode of generation, there seems to be agreement that the lower soul (or whatever expression of soul happens to be the generator) is unable to generate in the way the One and Intellect engender their respective successor, namely, by reason of their perfection or completeness and by remaining in themselves (V.2 [11] 1.7–9, 16–19). By contrast, the lower soul generates matter out of its own indefiniteness and inability to constitute itself as a separate hypostasis: in its attempt to replicate externally the unity above it, it produces something other than itself, something toward which it may move (III.9 [13] 3.7–12, V.2 [11] 1.18– 19) and which may receive it (IV.3 [27] 9.22–23, IV.8 [6] 5.24–27).[145]

At this point, one probably will have been wondering what the generation of matter has to do with love in Plotinus' metaphysics. First, it should be noticed that the question is not about the love of matter itself, with which I will deal later in this section, but rather about the love of the generator of matter. Thus, strictly speaking, the answer to this question belongs to the previous section, for if Plotinus does think pre-cosmic matter to be generated, its generator will be soul or some manifestation of soul, and the generation of matter will be an issue pertaining to psychic *eros*. However, since the answer to the question would remain somewhat obscure without some understanding of the discussion surrounding the generation of matter itself, I thought it more appropriate to deal with it here, although my account of the love of the lower soul for the sensible universe in the previous section already contains some anticipations of the answer suggested here.

Given my general agreement with Pigler on the answer to this question, a brief account of her position on the issue may suffice to clarify what I have in mind. Her main thesis is that "l'Âme inférieure, en créant le sensible, rompt avec la continuité de la procession *et qu'elle répète, tout en le pervertissant, en générant l'indétermination absolue qu'est la matière précosmique, le geste inaugural de l'Un*."[146] As we saw, it is characteristic of the intelligible that what is superior necessarily engender an inferior image of itself which, in turn, possesses the power to constitute itself as a hypostasis by turning or reverting toward its generator and trying to imitate its unity at its own level of existence.

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[143] Rist (see note 129 above); Pigler (2002, 227–237).

[144] Corrigan (1986, 172–176; 1996, 261–263). For a critique of Corrigan (1986) on this point, see O'Brien (1991, especially 81–82), to whom Corrigan (1996, 261–263) in turn replies; critical of Corrigan is also Narbonne (1987).

[145] See O'Brien (1999a, 182–183).

[146] Pigler (2002, 228).

> De cette façon, l'acte/conversion est le moment radicalement constituant de la procession, le coup d'arrêt qui place d'emblée l'image dans l'être. L'acte/conversion *résorbe* donc l'écart institué par la procession et permet ce contact ineffable, immatériel, instauré par la contemplation de l'être générateur.[147]

This is true down to the higher soul, but it is no longer the case with the lower soul.

> En effet, lorsque cette dernière tente de se contempler elle-même dans un acte de conversion vers soi, lorsqu'elle désire être avec elle-même, elle fait, du même coup, *avorter* le processus auto-constituant qui va de pair, en règle générale, avec le regard contemplateur. L'échec de l'auto-constitution de l'Âme inférieure en hypostase produit néanmoins une image, mais celle-ci est sans réalité.[148]

As the lower soul tries to replicate the unity that precedes it in the image that is posterior to it, its activity and self-unification are never fully accomplished, and its desire never fulfilled. Thus, the lower soul engenders pre-cosmic matter by replicating the original gesture of henologic superabundance, but this replica is an inverted analogue of the pre-hypostatic intelligible matter which proceeded from that original gesture. This is so because the production of matter is not a consequence of the perfection of soul. Instead, it occurs because in soul "il y a une perte d'unité et une perte d'*energeia* par rapport aux réalités intelligibles qui lui sont antérieures,"[149] so that pre-cosmic matter is but a residue of the primal energy springing from the One, "l'excédent qui n'a pu trouver place dans l'actualisation des hypostases"[150] (cf. Plotinus II.5 [25] 5.17–23). The production of matter introduces a rupture with the intelligible world and constitutes a new order (or rather the condition of possibility of a new order): the sensible cosmos (III.9 [13] 3.9–12). What should be emphasized here is that the generation of matter is a consequence of the kind of love that characterizes the lower soul, that is to say, unfulfilled desire, always essentially failing to reproduce the

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147 Pigler (2002, 229). In this quotation Pigler speaks of "conversion"; in Section 3 of Chapter 5 I will reserve this term for the soul's turning toward the One in the ascent journey.

148 Pigler (2002, 230).

149 Pigler (2002, 232).

150 Pigler (2002, 233).

self-unification that the soul contemplates in higher realities. For these reasons, the attributes of pre-cosmic matter are negative: it is an aberrant image of intelligible matter, a mere shadow of reason (λόγος) and a falling away from reason (VI.3 [44] 7.8); it is utterly unintelligible and it can be spoken of only in negative terms because it lacks being (III.6 [26] 7.7–13) or is said to have existence merely equivocally (I.8 [51] 5.9–12); it is privation (II.4 [12] 16.3–4), lacks form and actuality (e.g., II.5 [25] 4, III.6 [26] 13), and thus is unable to revert upon itself so as to constitute itself as a hypostasis or produce something after itself (e.g., VI.3 [44] 2.31–33); it is the principle of entropy and of death (II.4 [12] 5.17–18).[151] I will return to these and related descriptions of matter shortly.

The question concerning the motives of the generation of matter concludes this overview of some of the major themes and the basic literature surrounding the issue of generation. The question can be answered briefly by simply noting that all those who view Plotinus' metaphysics as a system of "émanation intégrale" virtually agree that the generation of matter occurs for two main reasons: first, because matter is the necessary condition for the existence of contraries in the sensible universe; second, because there must be an end to the process of derivation from the One, and this end is matter (see *Enneads* I.8 [51] 7.16–23, 15.1–3, III.2 [47] 5.25–32, IV.8 [6] 3.27–30, 6.1–15; see also II.9 [33] 12.30–44; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 47e5–48a1).[152]

4.2 *The Nature and* Eros *of Matter and Its Role in the Sensible Cosmos*

After this brief assessment of the generation of matter in Plotinus, we may turn to the issues of its nature and of the kind of *eros* that belongs to it. I will address the first issue by focusing on the three chief descriptions of pre-cosmic matter discussed by Pigler—matter as non-being (and some closely related characterizations), matter as the principle of entropy, and, in the next subsection, matter as evil[153]—and then move on to give an account of hyletic *eros*, the *eros* that is proper to matter.

To describe matter as non-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν: II.4 [12] 10.35, 16.3, II.5 [25] 4.6–14, 5.13, III.6 [26] 7.11–13, 14.20, VI.9 [9] 11.36–38; μὴ εἶναι: I.8 [51] 5.11–12, II.5 [25] 5.28, III.6 [26] 7.2),[154] as Plotinus often does, does not mean to imply that matter does not exist in any way whatsoever. Rather, here non-being means formlessness

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[151] For a fuller list of the negative attributes of matter in Plotinus, see Narbonne (2014, 234 and 243).

[152] Cf. Gerson (1994, 114–115).

[153] Pigler (2002, respectively 239–244, 244–250, and 250–256).

[154] As O'Brien (1995, especially 3–39; 1999a, 172–174) argues, Plotinus' description of matter as non-being is rooted in the development of the concept of non-being in Parmenides and in Plato's *Sophist*. See also Narbonne (1992).

(ἀμορφία): *by itself*, matter is formless (ἄμορφος), utter privation of form (see I.8 [51] 9.15–18, II.4 [12] 2.3, 10.27, 32, V.9 [5] 3.18–20, VI.7 [38] 33.32–33).[155] Due to its total lack of form, matter is contrasted with Intellect, the realm of form, in several ways. For instance, matter is said to be utterly undetermined (ἀόριστος), the realm of indetermination (ἀοριστία) itself (I.8 [51] 4.25–32, II.4 [12] 2.2–3, 10.13–17, 31–35, 11.29–43, 13.5–7, 14.24–30) in opposition to the complete, ever actual, and eternal determination of Intellect (i.e., the eternal determination of pure form and actuality). Conceptually related to indetermination are lack of measure (ἀμετρία) and lack of limit, or infinity (ἀπειρία), and so matter is also called unmeasured (ἄμετρος: I.2 [19] 2.20–21, I.8 [51] 4.27, 8.38; cf. I.8 [51] 3.13, 25–30, 6.42), and unlimited or infinite (ἄπειρος: I.8 [51] 3.13 and 31, 9.6, II.4 [12] 14.28–30 and chapter 15, III.6 [26] 7.8; cf. also VI.6 [34] 1.1–2). Again, matter is said to be absolute otherness (αὐτοετερότης: II.4 [12] 13.18; cf. II.4 [12] 3.9–16) in opposition to the relative otherness of Intellect (i.e., an otherness that always implies sameness).[156] Finally, it is referred to as one (μία, ἕν), simple (ἁπλοῦν), continuous (συνεχής), without quality (ἄποιος: II.4 [12] 8.1–2 and chapter 13; cf. also II.4 [12] 7.26, VI.1 [42] 25.29–33), and without magnitude or size (ἀμεγέθης: see II.4 [12] 8.11–12, chapters 11–12, and III.6 [26] 16–17), once again in contrast with the qualified unity of Intellect (i.e., a unity that already implies a plurality within itself and is productive of a plurality after itself).[157]

The contrast between matter and higher realities does not stop at the noetic realm but reaches all the way up to the One, the source of all things. In this case, however, the contrast is not expressed through explicitly contradictory terms, as it was with Intellect, but rather by a technical use of the same characterizations, which take on distinct and in many ways opposite meanings when predicated of the One and when predicated of matter. Let us begin with the first of these characterizations, formlessness (ἀμορφία). We saw that the One, too, is formless. If we are to make sense of this way of speaking, evidently we must take formlessness (just like power, unity, and love in other cases) to be predicated differently of the One and of matter. On the one hand, henologic formlessness is an indetermination of power, namely, the nature of the One as that which is virtually all things but actually none.[158] On the other hand, material formlessness is the indetermination of powerlessness, a perpetual state of potentiality (or, perhaps less imprecisely, of impotentiality, as we shall see presently), which as such not only never turns into something actual, but which is also incapable of producing something after itself.

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[155] In other similar passages, matter considered *by itself* is said to be deprived of, or opposed to, all form (εἶδος: I.6 [1] 2.16–18, I.8 [51] 4.2, 9.11–18, II.4 [12] 6.17–19, 13.23–24, III.6 [26] 10.14–28, 19.23–25; μορφή: I.6 [1] 2.16–18, II.4 [12] 8.14–16, 13.23–24, VI.3 [44] 2.31–33, VI.7 [38] 33.32–33; cf. also VI.5 [23] 8, where the term ἰδέα is used).

[156] On the otherness of Intellect see Section 2 of this chapter.

[157] In this connection, Plotinus expressly recognizes the Stoic view of the unity of all matter at II.4 [12] 1.8–9: see Zeno, SVF I.88; Chrysippus and the Stoics in general, SVF II.530–533.

[158] On the formlessness of the One, see P. Hadot (1988, 329–336).

As for the indetermination (ἀοριστία) of matter, it will be recalled that intelligible matter, too, is conceptualized as indetermination. This, again, is not incoherent, for although Plotinus sees both pre-cosmic and intelligible matter as undetermined, the former is what *by itself* remains deprived of form and lacks the power to revert upon itself and toward its generator, while the latter is what (logically) precedes the very realm of form—Intellect—but, by being contemplatively and lovingly turned toward the One, eventually becomes form, the fully actual second hypostasis (cf. II.4 [12] 5.12–20). The same reasoning can be applied to the respective unlimitedness or infinity (ἀοριστία) of intelligible and pre-cosmic matter (cf. II.4 [12] 15–16 , III.6 [16] 15.8), as well as their unmeasuredness (ἀμετρία) and otherness itself (αὐτοετερότης). What is significant for our purpose is that both the formlessness and the indetermination of lower matter are a clear index of the nature of its love, as I will clarify soon.

Concerning the characterizations of matter as one (μία, ἕν), simple (ἁπλοῦν), continuous (συνεχής), lacking quality (ἄποιος), and lacking magnitude (ἀμεγέθης), it may be objected in similar fashion that although the contrast between pre-cosmic matter and Intellect on this point is easily recognizable, the same characterizations attributed here to matter are elsewhere either explicitly predicated of the One, as in the cases of unity and simplicity (so obvious and frequent as to need no reference) and absence of magnitude (VI.9 [9] 6.8), or else closely associated with it, as in the case of continuity (e.g., VI.6 [34] 13.25–26, VI.9 [9] 1.8–10, 32–33) and absence of form and quality (e.g., VI.9 [9] 3.39–44, 7.5–16). But as with formlessness, here too the kind of unity, simplicity, continuity, and absence of quality and magnitude predicated of matter are unlike those attributed to the One, for while the One, being virtually all things, is the Principle from which all things actually derive, matter is a continuous field that merely reflects the form and life of higher realities while generating nothing after itself. Thus, the One is the simple power whence comes the differentiation of all reality; by contrast, when taken by itself, matter is that in which the differentiation of all reality ends.

It follows that Plotinian matter is unlike Aristotle's bronze or silver, which can be shaped into a statue or a bowl (*Physics* II.3.194b24–26), but is rather like a mirror (III.6 [26] 9.16–19) and the other reflecting surfaces mentioned in reference to the lowest portion of Plato's divided line in *Republic* VI.509d8–510a3: it only appears to take the shape of whatever it reflects, while in fact it is unable to assume either quality or quantity (II.4 [12] 8–12, III.6 [26] 16–17) and remains completely impassive to the informing action of what is ontologically prior to it (III.6 [26] 6–19). Thus, matter is said to be mere appearance (φάντασις: III.6 [26] 13.52; φαίνεσθαι: III.6 [26] 13.51, 15.27; φάντασμα: III.6 [26] 7.13) and, lacking all form, is closely associated—in fact, identified—with privation (στέρησις, as well as πενία and ἔνδεια: see I.8 [51] 5.24–25, II.4 [12] 14, V.9 [5] 10.18–20). Matter reflects everything while actually never taking up any form because in itself it is pure privation of form.[159] For this reason, matter is never actual but always potential (II.5 [25] 4–5),[160] and, *by itself* imperceptible (II.4 [12] 12.26–30), can be grasped only through some kind of "spurious reasoning" (νόθῳ λογισμῷ: II.4 [12] 10.11;[161] cf. the whole of II.4 [12] 10 and I.8 [51] 9.19–26).

Here again when matter is linked to potentiality, the meaning of the term δύναμις is clearly not that of power, as was the case with the One (cf. V.3 [49] 15.32–36). But neither is the potentiality of Plotinian matter Aristotelian potentiality, for the latter is the genuine capacity to take on or develop into a given form, an actuality, since for Aristotle every potentiality is the potentiality for something actual, and so a principle of change, once the appropriate conditions are given (see Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.1.251a9–11, b1–5, *Metaphysics* V.12.1019a15–16, IX.1.1046a9–11, 5.1047b35–1048a3, 1048a13–16; *De anima* II.5.417a28). By contrast, the potentiality of matter for Plotinus is one that will never be actualized. In this sense, it is not potentiality at all, but, perhaps more appropriately, by itself a factor of pure "impotentiality" (ἀδυναμία: I.8 [51] 14.11). Matter's lack of actuality is thus again opposed to the pure actuality of Intellect. For this reason, the only actuality which matter is said to have is that of a mere image, or of a lie (II.5 [25] 5.23–24: ἐνεργείᾳ εἴδωλον, ἐνεργείᾳ ψεῦδος, ἀληθινῶς ψεῦδος; cf. III.6 [26] 7.21–43), and, being something which exists only in a dim or obscure manner (ἀμυδρῶς ὄν: II.4 [12] 12.27), it is metaphorically associated with shadow (σκιά: III.6 [26] 18.30) and darkness (σκότος: I.8 [51] 4.32, 5.1–5, II.4 [12] 10.13–17, V.1 [10] 2.26; σκοτεινή: II.4 [12] 5.7).

Lastly, by being compared to a mother (III.6 [26] 19.1: ὥσπερ μητέρα), matter is associated with the Platonic receptacle (see Plato, *Timaeus* 50d3, 51a4–5). However, it is called "mother" only in a manner of speaking, for *by itself* (παρ' αὑτῆς: VI.7 [38] 33.33) it never has any form, but in its permanent indetermination it is sterile (ἄγονος: III.6 [26] 19.25) and generates nothing (cf. III.6 [26] 19.14–25, VI.3 [44] 2.31–33).

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[159] For an account of matter as privation see O'Brien (1999a, 178–181).

[160] For comments on II.5 [25] 4–5, see Narbonne (1998, 115–142), Arruzza (2015, 133–173).

[161] The reference is to Plato's *Timaeus* 52b2; cf. also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.10.1036a9, where matter is called "unknowable by itself" (ἄγνωστος καθ' αὑτήν).

It is because its nature includes all the features I have just described that Pigler rightly calls matter the principle of entropy. As we saw in the generation of Intellect and of Soul, each reality generates something similar to itself (in accordance with the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect), but in a weaker form (in accordance with the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect). The "offspring," in turn, becomes limited and determined by turning toward its generator (in accordance with the Principle of Reversion). As I anticipated, Pigler thinks that in the case of the lower soul, its product is pre-cosmic matter, in which the already weakened unity of the lower soul is weakened even further, to the point of becoming utter indetermination and lack of form. Because the lower soul borrows its intelligible content from without, it has a desire to deploy this content in something external yet of its own, and does so in its product, matter. This is the birth of the sensible: thanks to the informing action of the lower soul, pre-cosmic matter is given order and limit and becomes body. It follows that the sensible universe, being steeped in pre-cosmic matter, is itself partly an illusory realm (VI.3 [44] 8.30–37; cf. also II.3 [52] 17.18–25). I say "partly" because, unlike matter and in virtue of the ordering activity of the lower soul (to which I will turn briefly), the sensible has quantity, magnitude, and impenetrability (i.e., a repugnance of bodies to a universal mixing with each other, the topic of treatise II.7 [37]). However, in spite of the ordering activity of the lower soul, matter remains fundamentally lifeless (ἐστέρηταί τε ζωῆς: I.8 [51] 4.3; cf. also IV.7 [2] 3, 11.14–15, IV.8 [6] 6.7, VI.3 [44] 2.22–24), a dead thing (νεκρὸν: II.4 [12] 5.18; cf. also V.1 [10] 2.26). If it *seems* alive, it is only thanks to a life which it does not itself possess but merely receives from the lower soul, which is the only source of life in the sensible world (V.1 [10] 2.20–27). Therefore, matter is the principle of entropy because after it there is no further product; matter is the last term (τὸ ἔσχατον: I.8 [51] 7.19) in the process of derivation since with it the love that originated from the One comes to a stop, unable *by itself* both to revert and to produce something after itself (cf. III.6 [26] 7.8–9, 30, VI.3 [44] 2.31–33).

Having provided a brief account of the kind of thing matter is, let us take a step back and consider the workings of the soul on it, for though by itself formless and lifeless, in the sensible cosmos matter is not left *alone*, but is invested by the activity both of the World-Soul and of individual souls. While the World-Soul rules the sensible universe as a whole, individual souls take charge of portions of this universe and deploy their powers in them by informing them and endowing them with different forms of life (II.3 [52] 13). Thus, attended to by the World-Soul and individual souls, matter is shaped into a sensible cosmos. Like all levels of reality in the Plotinian process of derivation, the sensible, too, has its own proper *eros*.

We saw that the internal *eros* of Intellect (as opposed to its external *eros*, which is directed toward the One), or the perfect harmony subsisting among the multiplicity of the Ideas, was figuratively spoken of as a kind of friendship among the intelligibles. Similarly, at the level of the sensible Plotinus speaks of sympathy (συμπάθεια, συμπαθεῖν; occasionally συμπάσχειν: e.g., at IV.4 [28] 32.19, IV.9 [8] 2.20). His use of what originally appears to be a Stoic notion[162] is quite nuanced: sympathy is used in a variety of contexts to explain phenomena as diverse as magic and sense-perception. Thus, in IV.4 [28] 32 the whole universe is interpreted as a living being whose parts are kept together in a sympathetic relation (cf. also IV.4 [28] 35.8–9 and II.3 [52] 12.29–32), with soul directing it according to a rational plan in the way the internal principle of an individual directs its parts in relation to the whole (II.3 [52] 13.3–8); at IV.4 [28] 8.52–61 the movement of the heavens is described both in terms of sympathy and of harmony; at IV.9 [8] 3.1–4 different individual souls are said to stand in a mutual relation of sympathy; at IV.4 [28] 34.26–33 all the parts of the body harmonize (line 33: συμπαθοῦντα) in the activity of dancing. Notably, the whole treatise IV.5 [29] (*On difficulties about the soul III, or On sight*) explains the phenomenon of vision through the notion of sympathy;[163] and at IV.4 [28] 23.19–32 sympathy is peculiarly used to explain the phenomenon of sense-perception in a way vaguely reminiscent of *adaequatio* theories of truth that will become common matter of debate in the Middle Ages.[164] See also III.1 [3] 5.1–15, where astrological theories exploit the relation of sympathy among different cosmic phenomena to try to foresee future events (but going too far according to Plotinus, since they end up denying the role of freedom and turn the sensible into a realm of determinism); similarly, at IV.4 [28] 26.1–4, 34.1–26, and in chapters 40–41 of the same treatise magical practices and prayer are grounded in cosmic sympathy (see also IV.9 [8] 3.4–6).[165]

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[162] On συμπάθεια in ancient Stoicism see for example some of the testimonies about Chrysippus' views: SVF II.532, 170.14; SVF II.546, 172.39; SVF II.912, 264.8; SVF II.1013, 302.25; SVF II.1211, 347.24. In all these passages sympathy is predicated of the different parts and phenomena of the cosmos and of organisms. For treatments of Plotinus' use of this notion in relation to the Stoics see Graeser (1972, 68–72), Gurtler (1984).

[163] The terms συμπάθεια and συμπαθής occur several times in IV.5 [29]: 1.35, 2.17, 3.17 (cf. also 1.36, 2.22, 26, 3.19, 38, 8.3); ὁμοπάθεια is likely used as a synonym of συμπάθεια at IV.5 [29] 1.12 (see further IV.2 [4] 1.51, IV.7 [2] 3.2, IV.9 [8] 2.32). For a discussion of IV.5 [29] and the workings of sympathy in vision see Emilsson (1988, 36–62).

[164] E.g., Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* q1.a2.

[165] For a negative instance of sympathy, see I.2 [19] 6.22–27, where the soul endowed with higher virtue is said no longer to sympathize with what is inferior in it (contrast this with II.3 [52] 13.40–47); I will discuss the difference between higher and lower virtue in Section 1 of Chapter 6.

In virtually all these instances the concept of sympathy basically indicates a coordination of discrete parts or of distinct phenomena. Such a coordination is made possible on the basis of a single principle pervading those parts or phenomena, this principle being the one soul from which both the World-Soul and all individual souls originate, namely, the Soul-Hypostasis, which in this sense is the very condition of possibility of sympathy. Thus, at IV.3 [27] 8.1–3 all souls, including the World-Soul, are emphatically said to share in a relation of sympathy because they derive from the same Soul. What is important about this claim is that a sympathetic connection among beings is possible only where there is a true principle of unity at work in them. Plotinus explicitly states that this principle cannot be something that is merely corporeal (i.e., an inanimate body), for inanimate bodies do not, *by themselves*, concur to form an organism (i.e., the phenomenon to which the condition of sympathy belongs most conspicuously) unless soul is present. Most importantly, what displays sympathy is understood to be a kind of unity sympathizing with itself; and this unity is soul (IV.7 [2] 3.5: ψυχὴ δὲ αὐτῇ συμπαθής[166]). Plotinus never quite says it explicitly, but I think that the sympathy found in the sensible universe (i.e., in matter already illuminated and cared for by soul) can legitimately be interpreted as the love properly belonging to this level of reality. It is, in a sense, one last attempt—the *sensible* attempt—at replicating the unqualified unity and self-love of the Principle: Intellect did it noetically and emerged as the realm of friendship among the intelligibles; the Soul-Hypostasis (and derivatively, the World-Soul in its higher part) did it at its own level by remaining contemplatively directed toward Intellect and thus reproducing noetic unity discursively; finally, the lower soul, including individual souls, does it at the level of the sensible, by establishing a relation of sympathy among the different parts of individual organisms and of the sensible universe as a whole.

But just like the friendship among the intelligibles was a diluted replica of the pure self-love of the One, and just like discursive contemplation of the noetic realm by the Soul-Hypostasis was an inferior image of the perfectly unified multiplicity of Intellect, so the sympathy among the different parts of the cosmos displays a less intense unity than either noetic friendship or discursive contemplation. For this reason, in addition to the figurative sympathy of which I have been speaking, the sensible universe intrinsically includes enmity, a likewise figurative *bellum omnium contra omnes* of cosmic proportions, for as Plotinus puts it at III.2 [47] 2.1–6,[167]

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[166] This expression is found in Plotinus' attempt to refute the Epicurean theory that the soul is a convergence of atoms (IV.7 [2] 3.1–6; on the theory itself see scholium to Epicurus, *Letter* I.66 = Usener 1887, fr. 311 page 216.31–32; cf. also Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 63 = Usener 1887, 19.15–20.4; Lucretius, *De rerum natura* III.161–176), which is part of a larger portion of the treatise *On the immortality of the soul* (IV.7 [2] 2.1–8^5.43), where Plotinus extensively argues that the soul can be thought of as neither a body nor a property of a body. For discussions of IV.7 [2] 3.1–6 see Longo (2009, 118–121), Fleet (2016, 96–99).

> from that true universe which is one this universe comes into existence, which is not truly one; for it is many and divided into a multiplicity, and one part stands away from another and is alien to it, and there is not only friendship but also enmity because of the separation, and in their deficiency one part is of necessity at war with another.

The love at work in the sensible, therefore, while sharing in the unifying feature of love which is found at all stages of Plotinus' metaphysics, is accompanied by an aspect of enmity that was not present at higher levels.

Now, as each individual soul directs its attention to a portion of the sensible universe by making it *its own* body, a further stage of fragmentation is reached in the process of derivation, for the individual soul, though stably fixed in Intellect through its higher or undescended part, often, in its lower part, is as if caught in the activity of information and animation of matter, and as if scattered in the multiple chores that this activity entails. This is so because its power is inferior to that of the World-Soul, which by contrast has full control over the body of the universe by maintaining its vision fixed in the Soul-Hypostasis' contemplation of Intellect. Thus, delighted by the beauty of its own work, the individual soul runs the constant risk of taking this work as true reality, like a Narcissus craving to seize his own image reflected in water (see I.6 [1] 8.6–15, V.8 [31] 2.31–35).[168]

It is in connection with this problem that the characterization of matter as evil comes into focus.

4.3 *Matter as Evil*

Plotinus refers to matter (that is, pre-cosmic matter in my classification in the opening pages of this section) as evil, both adjectivally (*κακή*: I.8 [51] 14.50, III.6 [26] 11.44) and substantivally (τὸ *κακόν*: I.8 [51] 4.27, chapter 5 throughout, 7.6, 8.11, II.4 [12] 16.16–21, VI.7 [38] 28.12–29). Additionally, matter is called the first evil

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[167] III.2 [47] 2.1–6: Ὑφίσταται γοῦν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ ἐκείνου [2] καὶ ἑνὸς κόσμος οὗτος οὐχ εἷς ἀληθῶς· πολὺς γοῦν καὶ [3] εἰς πλῆθος μεμερισμένος καὶ ἄλλο ἀπ' ἄλλου ἀφεστηκὸς [4] καὶ ἀλλότριον γεγενημένον καὶ οὐκέτι φιλία μόνον, ἀλλὰ [5] καὶ ἔχθρα τῇ διαστάσει καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐλλείψει ἐξ ἀνάγκης [6] πολέμιον ἄλλο ἄλλῳ.

[168] On the myth of Narcissus in the *Enneads* see P. Hadot (1976); cf. also Pépin (1976, 199–200), Charles-Saget (1985, 99).

(πρῶτον κακόν: I.8 [51] 14.51; cf. also I.8 [51] 4.1–2) and the cause of evil(s) (αἴτιον τῶν κακῶν: I.8 [51] 8.27 and cf. 14.53; κακίας αἰτία: I.8 [51] 14.50; cf. also II.3 [52] 11.10–13, V.9 [5] 10.18–20). Most radically and almost paradoxically, at I.8 [51] 3.21–40 (particularly lines 24 and 38–40), matter is called "the substance of evil" (κακοῦ οὐσία: line 38), "the first evil and evil by itself" (πρῶτον καὶ καθ' αὑτὸ κακόν: lines 39–40; at I.6 [1] 6.22: τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ πρῶτον κακόν; for αὐτὸ κακόν see also I.8 [51] 13.14–15); and again, at I.8 [51] 5.9, "the true evil" (τὸ ὄντως κακὸν). When the notion of matter as evil is coupled with that of its necessity in the process of derivation, one will infer the necessity of evil as well (see I.4 [46] 11.15–16, I.8 [51] 6–7, III.2 [47] 5.25–32, VI.7 [38] 23.15–17; cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 176a5–8).[169] As a consequence of this, the sensible universe, having matter as one of its necessary conditions, is itself evil at least in one of its aspects, although Plotinus is quick to add that it is not the first evil (cf. I.8 [51] 4.1–2), a title which, as we just saw, is reserved for matter itself. Ultimately sensible matter or body, being a hylomorphic entity, still belongs somehow to the intelligible: in Platonic language, the sensible as an image of the intelligible (II.9 [33] 8.20–26, III.7 [45] 11.27–29, VI.7 [38] 12.1–4; cf. also IV.4 [28] 36.7–8, V.3 [49] 7.33–34, VI.3 [44] 1.19–21, VI.7 [38] 6.5–6, 7.21–23).[170]

The question that concerns us here is not whether the generation of matter (if one is willing to concede that the *Enneads* hold that matter is generated at all) was evil, for as Plotinus points out, matter stands for the last *necessary* stage in the derivation of all things from the One—and derivation is itself good. Rather, the problem is, first, whether the "descent"[171] of soul into matter is itself an evil act and, second, if it is not, in what sense matter can still be considered evil.

Plotinus is unambiguous about the first half of the problem: the descent of soul into matter is not itself evil, for it is a necessity of the process of unfolding of all reality from the Good (cf. IV.3 [27] 13).[172] Pigler observes:[173]

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[169] On the logical necessity of evil as the opposite of the Good in Plotinus see O'Meara (1999b, 124–133), commenting on Plotinus I.8 [51] 6.17–7.23.

[170] On the sensible as not itself evil see I.8 [51] 11–12, III.2 [47] 3.1–9, IV.8 [6] 6; in connection with the polemic against the Gnostics, see II.9 [33] 8–9. For comments on this issue see Fielder (1977), Leroux (1992).

[171] The treatise where Plotinus deals with the so-called descent of the soul into body is IV.8 [6], on which see Rist (1967, 112–129), Fleet (2012). Notice that in chapter 6 of this treatise Plotinus seems to have a more positive view of matter than those espoused in later treatises, II.4 [12] and particularly I.8 [51] (cf. ARMSTRONG IV, 394–395).

[172] See O'Brien (1971, 142; 1993, 5–18; 1999a, 189–190), Narbonne (2006b, 51–52).

[173] Pigler (2002, 247).

> Le descente de l'Âme inférieure ou, si l'on préfère, de la Nature, est *un substitut de la conversion* que l'Âme inférieure est incapable de produire car elle est déjà trop multiple. On peut pourtant analyser le fait de cette « descente » comme le moyen dont elle se sert pour se connaître elle-même, pour connaître ses propres contenus.

After matter has been generated, the lower soul turns toward it and gives it form, thus bringing about the sensible as a mixture of matter and form; successively, individual souls endow some portions of it with various manifestations of life and care for them. The difference between the World-Soul and individual souls is that the former is always completely in control of its body, while the latter are not (II.9 [33] 7.7–18). Moreover, as Rist argues,[174] the descent of the lower soul (i.e., Nature or the lower part of the World-Soul) must be distinguished from that of individual souls, for while the former is an ontological necessity, the latter is the expression of a particular will. He clarifies that what is voluntary in the descent is not the movement by which the individual soul comes into matter to inform and illuminate it, which like all movement of procession occurs of necessity; what is voluntary is rather the attitude that the individual soul takes toward that which it illuminates.[175] Rist observes: "The pure soul can act in its descent as does the World-Soul, and no harm is done. Most souls, however, will be overwhelmed by their own handiwork and accept the necessity of descent so gladly as to forget the moral duty of return."[176] Neither the generation of matter (if matter is indeed generated) nor the descent of the soul, therefore, is in itself evil for Plotinus.

What remains to be discussed, then, is the second half of the problem, namely, in what sense matter can still be called evil if we allow that its generation is a necessity of the overall process of derivation of all things from the One. Broadly and in preliminary fashion, the question can be answered by saying that matter is evil metaphysically (or ontologically) rather than morally. As Rist rightly points out also in connection with other topics, this distinction is left implicit in the *Enneads*, although it can be made explicit on the basis of some passing remarks made by Plotinus.[177] The clearest of these remarks is perhaps the one found at I.8 [51] 5.30–34:[178]

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[174] Rist (1967, 112–129), followed by Pigler (2002, 248 note 1).

[175] Rist (1967, 121–122).

[176] Rist (1967, 122). For some interpretations of the so-called descent of the soul in Plotinus see Rist (1967, 112–129), Baladi (1971 , especially 65–98), O'Brien (1977; 1993, 5–18), Torchia (1993, 71–93).

[177] Rist (1971, 77–78).

[178] I.8 [51] 5.30–34: Θεοῖς δὲ ὕλης παρούσης [31] τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὸ κακὸν μὴ παρεῖναι, τὴν κακίαν ἣν [32] ἄνθρωποι ἔχουσιν, ὅτι μηδ' ἀνθρώποις ἅπασι· κρατεῖν γὰρ [33] αὐτῆς—ἀμείνους δέ, οἷς μὴ πάρεστι—καὶ τούτῳ κρατεῖν [34] δὲ τῷ μὴ ἐν ὕλῃ ἐν αὐτοῖς ὄντι.

> Though there is matter with the visible gods, evil is not there, not the vice which men have—since not even all men have it; the visible gods master matter,—yet the gods with whom there is no matter are better—and they master it by that in them which is not material.

What I think is implied in this text is precisely a distinction between metaphysical and moral evil. Matter is metaphysical evil in the sense that it is the last necessary stage of the process of derivation from the One; and since the One is also the Good, what is furthest removed from it can rightly be called evil. But matter is not itself entirely responsible for moral evil insofar as it does *not necessitate* the performance of vicious actions. The sensible gods (i.e., the heavenly bodies) prove this by their ability to bring the bodies to which they are united completely under their control. The same is true of some better people, elsewhere called divine or godlike (θεῖοι: VI.9 [9] 11.49; cf. also VI.7 [38] 5.21), among whom Plotinus enumerates Plato, the ancients,[179] and the Platonists (III.5 [50] 1.6, IV.8 [6] 1.23, II.9 [33] 6.36, 10.13, V.9 [5] 1.16). Matter does remain the necessary condition for moral evil, however, to the extent that the individual soul may succumb to it by making its own dealings with it its primary concern, thus losing sight of the fact that its own destiny lies elsewhere, in the intelligible. But if there were no matter, it would be impossible for the soul to go astray, since the very occasion for doing so—matter—would be missing.[180]

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[179] Cf. Charrue (1978, 18–23).

[180] To the extent that matter is considered a necessary but not a sufficient cause of evil for the soul, the other partial cause being the soul's weakness, I am therefore in agreement with O'Brien (e.g., 1971, 139–146; 1999a, 183–190), whose solution to the problem is perhaps the most attractive I know of in terms of shielding Plotinus from the charge of incoherence. I am also untroubled by the claim that while Plotinus for the first time made the sensible world depend on the One not only for its activity but for its very existence, his view of matter as evil itself is "a remnant of the old Platonic and Aristotelian dualism of two eternal and independently existent principles" (O'Brien 1971, 146). However, I am reluctant to follow O'Brien when he claims that, while from this broader perspective Plotinus' view of matter as evil is "at odds with the general direction of his metaphysics," from a narrower point of view "Plotinus' conception of matter and the soul's weakness as part causes of sin is skilfull and consistent" (O'Brien 1971, 146). The reason for my reluctance is that such a narrower point of view seems to achieve consistency by artificially bracketing precisely what constitutes the greatest obstacle to consistency: the fact that matter—evil itself—ultimately derives from the Good (see also my remarks in note 201 below). Regardless, like many other questions surrounding the status of matter in Plotinus, that of the precise sense in which matter is supposed to be evil for the individual soul is debated; see for instance O'Brien (1971; cf. also 1999a, 185–187), who offers both a critical account of earlier positions and provides his own interpration, in turn variously criticized: briefly by Blumenthal (1987, 559) and O'Meara (1999b, 157), more in detail by Narbonne (2007b, 125–128; 2011, 13–15)..

Clearly, the matter at issue which is called evil here is not sensible matter but pre-cosmic matter, since as I mentioned earlier, the sensible universe, though material, already shares in form and to that extent cannot be radically evil. Pre-cosmic matter, by contrast, is wholly deprived of what, within the Plotinian universe, is considered good—form—and it is for this reason that it is called the first and true evil, by itself evil, and the substance of evil. Thus, as we already saw, matter is non-being, not in the sense that it has no existence, but in the sense that it is opposed to the realm of Being which is Intellect, and ultimately, qua evil, to the Good. In this view, matter reflects form like a mirror, but this reflection is like an illusion, for matter itself remains ever devoid of form. Its status of evil, however, is not illusory, and so matter is *truthfully* a lie (ἀληθινῶς ψεῦδος: II.5 [25] 5.23–24).

Plotinus' description of matter as non-being and evil is thus due to the fact that it constitutes the last stage in the process of derivation from the One and stands as the very opposite of the Principle and of the intelligible realm as a whole. But as Pigler[181] notices, this claim becomes problematic if we continue to understand contraries in Aristotelian terms, as did Proclus and Simplicius, for example.[182] For Aristotle, being has no contrary (*Categories* 5.3b25, *De generatione et corruptione* I.3; cf. also *Physics* I.9.192a13–25), for that would be the mere absence of all existence, while for Plotinus it does, for Being is form, and so evil is understood as itself substantial, and necessarily so within his own metaphysical parameters. What this means is that evil is not an illusion; it is real: it is pre-cosmic matter as pure and continuous dispersion which will never achieve unification. Thus, as Pigler argues, pre-cosmic matter is the inverted image of intelligible matter. Unable to revert upon itself and toward its generator (if , once again, we grant that it has one), pre-cosmic matter can do nothing but scatter: while pre-hypostatic noetic matter is infinity constantly directed toward the One and without multiplicity (the multiplicity of Intellect, in fact, is logically posterior to it), pre-cosmic matter is complete dispersion, scattering in an infinite flight away from the Source. The lower soul puts a partial stop to this flight by informing matter, but matter, *by itself*, is irreversible dispersion and a flight from the Good.

In spite of all this, matter is not deprived of all desire; and as with every desire inhering in what is posterior to the One, some lack is implied. Since matter is described as the utter privation of being and form, its desire will be a desire of being and form; or, as Plotinus puts it, matter is "an aspiration to existence" (ὑποστάσεως ἔφεσις: III.6 [26] 7.13). Here again I take it that Plotinus does not mean to say that matter, desiring existence, is absolute nothingness, but that it is the kind of non-being that is opposed to the wholly determined being which is Intellect (and, derivatively, soul), or Being in the technical sense, as I pointed out in my brief discussion of the Platonic ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας of *Republic* VI.509b9 in the previous chapter.

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[181] Pigler (2002, 263–264).

[182] See Proclus, *On the Existence of Evils* 31 and 37; Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* 109.5–110.25; cf. Narbonne (2007b, 158–163).

It will be objected that if this is all that matter amounts to—desire of form and being—then it does not differ very much from soul; the intensity of their respective desires may differ, but their desideratum is the same: form and being, or true Being as identical with Form. This may in part be conceded, but the difference between matter and soul lies, not in the identity of their desideratum, but in the way they approach it or receive it. More specifically, while soul is actually shaped or informed by erotically directing its regard toward Intellect, matter's participation in the intelligible is fictional;[183] its "aspiration to existence" is destined to remain permanently unfulfilled due to its nature, which is only able to reflect form without itself ever becoming actually informed. In Plotinus' own words at III.6 [26] 7.16–29:[184]

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[183] As with the other questions posed earlier in this section, the issue of the participation (μετάληψις, μεταλαμβάνειν; μετοχή, μέθεξις, μετέχειν; cf. the relevant entries in Sleeman and Pollet 1980 for textual references) of matter in the intelligible received its fair share of somewhat conflicting interpretations (see for example the exchange between O'Brien and Corrigan: O'Brien 1981, 115; Corrigan 1986, 176–177; O'Brien 1991, 71–73; Corrigan 1996, 167, 263–266), with some texts seemingly suggesting a positive reading (i.e., that matter does participate in the intelligible), and others, a negative one (i.e., that it does not). Among the passages suggesting a positive reading are IV.8 [6] 6 (especially lines 14–28), VI.5 [23] 8 (in particular lines 10–14, 35–39), V.9 [5] 6.20–24, III.6 [26] 7.42–43, III.9 [13] 3.16, IV.3 [27] 9.26–27, VI.5 [23] 11.35–38, and, perhaps most of all, V.8 [31] 7.22–23 (matter as εἶδός τι ἔσχατον, a last form, or as somewhat less positively put by Cilento 1947–1949, *ad. loc.*, "una certa forma—infima"; see ARMSTRONG V, 259 note 2, but contrast it with VI.7 [38] 27.11–13, where Plotinus writes, not that the last form is matter, but that the last form is next—προσεχὲς—to matter in the upward direction; see Smith 2017, 111–112 for an explanation). Among the passages suggesting a negative reading are I.2 [19] 2.20–22, I.8 [51] 5.9–10 and chapter 14 (especially lines 38–43), II.5 [25] 5.22, III.6 [26] 7, 11, 12.3, 13.53–54, 14.21–22, and perhaps III.8 [30] 9.24. Once again, given the limited aim of this study, the issue proves to be too vast to be given even an elementary treatment.

[184] III.6 [26] 7.16–29: …καὶ τὰ ἐναντία ἀεὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ [17] φανταζόμενον, μικρὸν καὶ μέγα καὶ ἧττον καὶ μᾶλλον, [18] ἐλλεῖπόν τε καὶ ὑπερέχον, εἴδωλον οὐ μένον οὐδ' αὖ φεύγειν [19] δυνάμενον· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἰσχύει ἅτε μὴ ἰσχὺν παρὰ [20] νοῦ λαβόν, ἀλλ' ἐν ἐλλείψει τοῦ ὄντος παντὸς γενόμενον. [21] Διὸ πᾶν ὃ ἂν ἐπαγγέλληται ψεύδεται, κἂν μέγα φαντασθῇ, [22] μικρόν ἐστι, κἂν μᾶλλον, ἧττόν ἐστι, καὶ τὸ ὂν αὐτοῦ ἐν [23] φαντάσει οὐκ ὄν ἐστιν, οἷον παίγνιον φεῦγον· ὅθεν καὶ τὰ [24] ἐν αὐτῷ ἐγγίγνεσθαι δοκοῦντα παίγνια, εἴδωλα ἐν εἰδώλῳ [25] ἀτεχνῶς, ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ τὸ ἀλλαχοῦ ἱδρυμένον ἀλλαχοῦ [26] φανταζόμενον καὶ πιμπλάμενον, ὡς δοκεῖ, καὶ ἔχον οὐδὲν καὶ [27] δοκοῦν τὰ πάντα. Τὰ δὲ εἰσιόντα καὶ ἐξιόντα τῶν [28] ὄντων μιμήματα καὶ εἴδωλα εἰς εἴδωλον ἄμορφον καὶ [29] διὰ τὸ ἄμορφον αὐτῆς ἐνορώμενα…

> It [viz., matter] always presents opposite appearances on its surface, small and great, less and more, deficient and superabundant, a phantom which does not remain and cannot get away either, for it has no strength for this, since it has not received strength from intellect but is lacking in all being. Whatever announcement it makes, therefore, is a lie, and if it appears great, it is small, if more, it is less; its apparent being is not real, but a sort of fleeting frivolity; hence the things which seem to come to be in it are frivolities, nothing but phantoms in a phantom, like something in a mirror which really exists in a place but is reflected in another; it seems to be filled, and holds nothing; it is all seeming. "Imitations of real beings pass into and out of it,"[185] ghosts into a formless ghost, visibly reflected in it[186] because of its formlessness.

It is in passages like this that Plotinus interprets the character of Penia from Plato's *Symposium*, not as intelligible matter (as he does in treatise III.5 [50] *On eros*, which I will discuss in the next chapter), but as lower matter (see I.8 [51] 14, especially lines 34–43, and III.6 [26] 14.5–17). In I.8 [51] 14, Penia as pre-cosmic matter steals from Poros, who in this context represents the soul, part of his wealth (i.e., his powers), and in doing so, she is identified with *real* evil, for despite all its merely negative descriptions, matter remains an *actively* weakening power. Thus, at I.8 [51] 14.35–36, matter, represented by Penia, is metaphorically attributed a kind of intentionality as Plotinus writes that "matter is there [viz., by the soul, Poros] and begs it and, we may say, bothers it and wants to come right inside" (ὕλη δὲ παροῦσα προσαιτεῖ καὶ οἷον καὶ ἐνοχλεῖ καὶ εἰς τὸ εἴσω παρελθεῖν θέλει). The weakening effect of matter on the individual soul is described as a darkening of the illumination it receives from the soul. The illumination, which as an informing activity is not in itself evil, is made evil when it encounters matter because matter, merely reflecting a form which it never has, actively attracts the illuminating soul, so to speak, distracting it from the task of pursuing higher realities. As Plotinus argues in III.6 [26] 14, matter deceptively reflects the forms that the soul makes available to it in its illuminating activity and thus tricks the soul, as it were, to turn its attention to it by passing itself off as true being. Pigler,[187] commenting on III.6 [26] 14, aptly summarizes what is at issue here:

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[185] A reference to Plato, *Timaeus* 50c4–5, cited again later in the same treatise, at III.6 [26] 11.2–3.

[186] I translate ἐνορώμενα at III.6 [16] 7.29 with "visibly reflected in it" to emphasize the mirror metaphor (cf. Sleeman and Pollet 1980, 386.37; Igal 1982–1998, *ad loc.*); ARMSTRONG, whose translation I otherwise follow, has "visible."

[187] Pigler (2002, 260).

> En s'unissant au reflet issu de l'Âme-Poros, la matière-Pénia devient ainsi le substitut illusoire de la réalité authentique. Or, le pouvoir de la matière provient de ce que celle-ci « aspire à l'existence » [III.6 [26] 7.13], désire l'être, et ce désir devient violence lorsque la matière veut se rendre maîtresse de l'image de la forme qui vient en elle [III.6 [26] 14.8–9].

The power of matter, therefore, is at the same time a power of illusion, corruption, and death. Deception by matter for the individual soul often means falling (πτῶμα: I.8 [51] 14.44) or sinking (καταδῦναι: I.8 [51] 13.23) into what is ontologically inferior to it and may lead to its death. Since according to Plotinus the individual soul is immortal, the term death (θάνατος) applies to it metaphorically, for by "dying" the soul does not cease to be altogether; instead, its pure nature is turned into something worse, to wit, vice, bringing Plotinus to conclude: "So it dies as far as the soul can die, and its death, while it is still plunged into the body, is to sink in matter and be filled with it" (I.8 [51] 13.21–23).[188] For this reason, matter is equated to evil. Matter, in its ability to influence individual souls, has an *active* role in their "fall" or corruption. Thus, it is not merely an occasion or a condition for doing evil, but evil itself, for in its quasi-intentional deception of individual souls, we could say that it enfeebles or clouds their ability to remain oriented toward the Principle, that is, the connatural *eros* for the One given to them by the One itself. And yet matter cannot exist as a really independent principle. In fact, it becomes perceptible and desirable only because form comes to it through the soul: it is, as Plotinus puts it, like a prisoner in golden chains (I.8 [51] 15.25, probably an allusion to Sophocles, *Electra* 837–838).

The notion that matter should not only be a mere occasion for evil but also have an active role in misleading individual souls is an important one in Plotinus' metaphysics and, like many other statements made about matter in the *Enneads*, the cause of some controversy. It seems to me that in several passages Plotinus is emphatic about the *active* role played by matter in the corruption of individual souls. In I.6 [1] 5.31–50, he asks rhetorically about the already weakened soul whether its ugliness (τὸ αἶσχος: line 31) was not in fact imported from the outside (ἐπακτὸν), so that the soul is made impure (ἀκάθαρτον: line 33) and no longer able to see what it would naturally see in its pure condition (οὐκέτι μὲν ὁρῶσαν ἃ δεῖ ψυχὴν ὁρᾶν: lines 36–37). And at lines 48–50 he concludes: "So we shall be right in saying that the soul becomes ugly by mixture and dilution and inclination towards the body and matter."[189] More emphatically, at III.6 [26] 14.7–10 once again Plotinus attributes to matter the kind of evil intentionality which we already saw will be asserted at I.8 [51] 14.35–36: "this other thing [viz., matter] by its presence and its self-assertion and a kind of begging and its poverty makes a sort of violent attempt to grasp, and is cheated by not grasping, so that its poverty may remain and it may be always begging."[190] And most explicitly, at I.8 [51] 14.40–54, matter is said to darken (ἐσκότωσε: line 41) the illumination coming from soul (lines 40–41). In this way, it weakens the soul (ἀσθενὲς πεποίηκε: line 42) by providing it with the occasion to generate and the reason to come into matter, and this weakening is called the fall (πτῶμα: line 44) of the soul (lines 41–47, 50–54). Finally, matter is said to hinder the powers of the soul, thus "producing a kind of cramped condition, and making evil what it has got hold of by a sort of theft" (lines 47–48)[191] (lines 47–50; cf. also II.3 [52] 9.19–24). The extent to which all these statements about the active involvement of matter in the fall of the soul and its status as evil should be taken metaphorically is, of course, a crucial point of disagreement in the debate.

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[188] I.8 [51] 13.21–23: Ἀποθνῄσκει οὖν, ὡς ψυχὴ ἂν θάνοι, καὶ ὁ [22] θάνατος αὐτῇ καὶ ἔτι ἐν τῷ σώματι βεβαπτισμένῃ ἐν ὕλῃ [23] ἐστὶ καταδῦναι καὶ πλησθῆναι αὐτῆς.

O'Brien speaks of Plotinus' views on matter as part of a kind of theodicy: "the designation of matter as evil is intended to be not so much a condemnation of matter as a means of protecting the realities of the higher world from any immediate responsibility for the evils which we see in this world."[192] I think this claim is correct. However, I believe it should be endorsed cautiously, for on its basis one may be tempted to undermphasize the identification of matter with the reality of evil—an identification which Plotinus *does* make (although I am aware that disagreement does and will occur, among other things, about what precisely contitutes proper emphasis on this subject). I think that we would fail to pay sufficient attention to Plotinus' identification of matter and evil, for instance, if we were to interpret evil not as something objectively and essentially belonging to the nature matter, but as a kind of perspective that emerges only when the soul comes to interact with it.[193] But as we saw, in Plotinus matter is not called evil accidentally, but evil itself; that is, matter is evil, not once soul interacts with it (in any event, was there ever a moment in which soul did not interact with it?), but because whether something interacts with it or not, its nature is *essentially* deceitful (this is what I meant when earlier I referred to it as metaphysical evil). It is true that someone or something must be deceived in order for deception to occur, but it seems that for Plotinus matter is deceitful, or behaves deceitfully, whenever something approaches it, always and without exception, thereby not only being itself wholly incapable of reverting toward higher realities, but also naturally misleading the individual soul, as it were, into turning its attention away from them.

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[189] I.6 [1] 5.48–50: Αἰσχρὰν δὴ ψυχὴν λέγοντες μίξει καὶ [49] κράσει καὶ νεύσει τῇ πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὕλην ὀρθῶς ἂν [50] λέγοιμεν.

[190] III.6 [26] 14.7–10: τῇ δ' αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ [8] καὶ τῇ τόλμῃ καὶ οἷον προσαιτήσει καὶ πενίᾳ οἷον βιασάμενον [9] λαβεῖν καὶ ἀπατηθὲν τῇ οὐ λήψει, ἵνα μένῃ ἡ πενία [10] καὶ ἀεὶ προσαιτῇ.

[191] I.8 [51] 14.47–48: οἷον συσπειραθῆναι ποιῆσαι [48] ἐκείνην, ὃ δ' ἔλαβεν οἷον κλέψασα ποιῆσαι κακὸν εἶναι.

[192] O'Brien (1999a, 189–190).

[193] This is argued, for example, by Schäfer (2004), who also tries to defend Plotinus' view of evil against Proclus' criticism which I introduce in the next paragraph. Thus, in III.2 [47] 4.36–44 and III.3 [48] 4.45–53, evil would seem to result from the soul's habitual interaction with matter and the ensuing failure to rectify the habit.

It will be easily conceded, I maintain, that among the thorny problems of every metaphysical system, evil is probably the thorniest. Plotinus' metaphysics is no exception. Thus, it will not come as a surprise that, given matter's close association and even identification with evil, the question concerning its origin and nature is not new, but is part of a debate that goes back to antiquity. For example, in *On the Existence of Evils* 31.9–10, Proclus sharply draws the alternative facing someone subscribing to a system of "émanation intégrale," or a metaphysics of derivation of all reality from one single good source: "either to make the good the cause of evil or to posit two principles of beings [*aut bonum mali causam facere aut duo entium principia*]."[194] Proclus himself, in his discussion of the issue in *On the Existence of Evils* 30–37, escapes this alternative through a qualified denial of the reality of evil, or at least through a considerable weakening of evil as an active force.

If one accepts a perspectival interpretation of Plotinus' understanding of matter as evil, an interpretation according to which matter is evil not absolutely but only from the perspective of the soul interacting with it, then Plotinus' view of matter as evil might be reconciled with that of Proclus.[195] This solution would take care, at least in part, of the paradox of positing a single good source of all things while admitting the reality of evil and, as Schäfer suggests,[196] would be methodologically justified by a *lectio difficilior* of Plotinus' utterances on matter as evil itself. In spite of the attractiveness of this solution,

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[194] The likely Greek text of these lines, 31.9–10, is found in a work by Isaak Sebastokrator and is reported by Isaac (1982) in his edition of Proclus' *On the Existence of Evils*: ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ κακοῦ ποιεῖν αἴτιον ἢ δύο τῶν ὄντῶν ἀρχάς.

[195] A possibility envisioned by Schäfer (2004, 294). For treatments of the issue illustrating the difference between Plotinus' and Proclus' positions, though varying on other points, see O'Meara (1997; 1999b, 30–39; 2005, 182–185), Opsomer (2001; 2007), Narbonne (2001, 126–133; 2007b, 123–125), Van Riel (2001).

[196] Schäfer (2004, 293).

I find it hard to downplay Plotinus' insistence on the identification of matter with evil. Instead, it seems to me that Plotinus paradoxically accepts the tension expressed by the first half of the alternative drawn by Proclus and refuses to subscribe to a perspectival understanding (hence to a denial or even a mere weakening) of the reality of evil. In short, it is not entirely clear to me that Plotinus' solution to the issue of evil is free of internal conflict, most notably if we espouse the single-source thesis, or "émanation integral," and admit that matter ultimately derives from the One.

The reasoning in support of this conclusion can be roughly summarized as follows.[197] First, since Plotinus rejects the hypothesis of there being two Principles (as against the second horn of Proclus' dilemma); second, since the absolutely prior term is at the same time the unqualified Good, which necessarily produces something after itself while the product is inferior in goodness to the producer (in accordance with what I called the Principle of Superabundance and the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect respectively); and third, since the series of posterior terms cannot go on *ad infinitum*; it follows that the last term of the series—pre-cosmic matter—will lack *all* goodness, and therefore will deserve to be called evil. This conclusion would be unproblematic if Plotinus understood evil simply in terms of privation of goodness, but it is possible, as Opsomer argues, that Plotinus does not have a merely privative understanding of evil, for as we saw, he calls matter "evil itself" and emphasizes its active involvement in the corruption of the soul, thus equating "not good" with "bad."[198] Following Opsomer, if a dualism of principles of the Gnostic kind is rejected as a viable solution, and unless we either endorse what I called a perspectival view of the nature of matter or conceive of evil in merely privative terms,[199] it appears that Plotinus' understanding of matter will result in the view that a wholly good cause produces a wholly—actively, substantially—evil effect. Thus, it seems to me that Plotinus' position remains a paradoxical one, at least on the face of it, for it involves the simultaneous affirmation *both* of one single good Principle *and* of the reality of evil, the latter being identical with matter and yet deriving from that same Principle.[200]

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[197] Cf. O'Meara (2005). The reasoning hinges on the notion of "semi-genus," a peculiar class which includes members whose difference from one another is one of priority and posteriority (Lloyd 1990, 76–78; see also Lloyd 1962; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* III.3.999a6–14, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.1096a17–19, *Politics* III.1.1275a35–38) and "in which (in its Neoplatonic version) the posterior terms derive from the prior" (O'Meara 2005, 184).

[198] Opsomer (2007, 180).

[199] As it would seem to be the case for O'Meara (2005).

[200] Despite my general agreement with Pigler (2002, 201–266; substantially unmodified in Pigler 2004, 147–163) on most issues, including that of the status of the *eros* of matter, I wonder whether her reading of Plotinus' metaphysics of derivation of all things from the One sufficiently emphasizes this problem.

If I am correct about what I have argued concerning Plotinus' identification of matter and evil, the active role of matter in the soul's "fall" from higher realities, along with the difficulties that this creates for his metaphysics, can hardly be underemphasized. And if what I have presented in Part 1 of this study were the whole of Plotinus' story about love—his erotics—this story would be a rather sorry one; for if matter has such an essentially deceitful nature, one wonders whether the individual embodied soul, being constantly in contact with it, will ever be able to eschew its corrupting influence.

Now, it is precisely in light of these doubts that Plotinus' understanding of love points at the possibility of a different ending to his story, a more positive ending. For even if matter is the radically deceiving and, as it were, intentionally corrupting element that it appears to be in Plotinian metaphysics, no individual soul seems to be condemned in principle to be irreparably defiled by it. Instead, Plotinus is confident enough to think that individual embodied souls have the ability to purify themselves through their own powers (at least in principle, even if some may not succeed in doing so) because there is an inborn desire in them—their connatural *eros*—which already directs them toward their origin, the One as the supremely loved. Perhaps this inborn love is also what might considerably temper, if without entirely erasing it,[201] the paradox of the derivation of matter as evil from the Good; for if in this very love the One has already provided a way to overcome the corrupting influence of matter on the individual soul, then matter itself may be “allowed” to be evil, so to speak, and the metaphysical necessity that characterizes it as the terminus of the process of derivation does not immediately translate in the soul’s necessity of being irrevocably trapped in it. The task of Part 2 is to investigate the relevance of love in the soul’s efforts to rekindle its connection to higher realities in the face of its involvement with matter and ultimately to unite with the One.

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[201] This proviso is in place, I maintain, because even if the One does provide, in the soul's inborn *eros*, a resource to overcome the corrupting influence of matter (as I will implicitly argue in Part 2), we are still left to wonder how such an entity—matter—could both derive from the Good and be evil itself (that is, not a mere privation of goodness, but an active and, as it were, intentional power of corruption). In other words, through its connatural love, the soul may indeed prevail over the corrupting influence of matter, but *from within the boundaries of Plotinus' metaphysics* it is still not clear how, given a single principle which is at the same time the Good, there should even be an entity that is emphatically described as evil itself. Thus, as I already pointed out in note 180 above, I tend to agree with O'Brien (1971, 142–143; 1999a, 185–187) when he calls matter a necessary but not sufficient condition of evil in the soul (even despite the fact that Plotinus appears to attribute to it a much greater active power to influence the soul than O'Brien concedes: see O'Meara 1999b, 157 and especially Narbonne 2006b, 47–50 and Narbonne 2007b, 125–128), but it seems to me that in the context of a metaphysics of "émanation intégral," the problem of having such a thing as matter *at all* remains (naturally, O'Brien is well aware of the difficulties that evil entails in such a metaphysics: e.g., O'Brien 1971, 114–115 and 142). In fact, the problem would be somewhat different but not less urgent if we were to reject the notion that Plotinus metaphysics is one of "émanation integral" and opted for some form of dualism, in which case we would not take matter to proceed from any of the higher realities but rather view it as an independent—ungenerated—principle. As I just said, the problem would not be less urgent, for what would still be in need of an explanation is why matter, which is responsible for the weakness (ἀσθένεια) and corruption (κακία) of the soul (Plotinus I.8 [51] 14.49–50) *at a general level*, exercises a

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more corrupting influence on some embodied souls than it does on others, from which it would seem to follow that *at a particular level* each embodied soul, though ultimately a product of the Good, is still in some measure responsible for its own corruption (cf. Narbonne 2006b, 64 note 44, who makes a similar point in relation to a somewhat different problem). But if this is so, contrary to what Plotinus wishes to establish in I.8 [51] (see particularly chapter 2 of that treatise), higher realities would not seem to be free of blame with respect to the corruption of the individual soul, given that, unlike matter in this hypothesis, the soul proceeds from those realities and ultimately from the One. A full resolution of these problems, if indeed there is one to be found in the *Enneads*, would require a comprehensive study that coordinates the best results of Plotinus scholarship not only on matter, but also on embodied existence (particularly the role of freedom and necessity in it) and on the concept of derivation of reality from the One.

PART 2

The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent

…καὶ ἔρως γίνεται.

PLOTINUS VI.7 [38] 22.9–10

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CHAPTER 3

The Nature and Variety of Love in the Soul

A Guided Tour through Enneads *III.5* [*50*] On Eros

With Part 2, the focus of our discussion shifts from the topic of the derivation of all things from the One conceived as the Principle to that of the soul's ascent to it conceived as the Good. The present chapter initiates this shift of focus with a treatment of the nature and variety of the love present in the soul. My chief purpose is to identify a type of love in the soul which grounds the possibility of the ascent to the One by connaturally (though neither immediately nor effortlessly) directing the soul to its first origin, a love to which I will be referring to as connatural, inborn or innate *eros*. I look for textual evidence of this type of love mainly, if not exclusively, in the treatise of the *Enneads* explicitly dedicated to our topic, treatise III.5 [50] *On eros*.

Since in *Enneads* III.5 [50] Plotinus works at reconciling some seemingly contradictory statements on love found in Plato, focusing particularly on selected passages and utterances from the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, my reading of this treatise is at the same time an occasion to touch on Plotinus' interpretive relation to Plato, particularly as regards his understanding of love. After all, Plotinus' interest in the topic of love is not accidental, for love is a theme dear to Plato and often studied by Plato scholars,[1] and Plotinus takes Plato to be his main source of inspiration. Thus, a reconstruction of Plotinus' understanding of love that aims at being as thorough as possible should include at least a sketch of the way in which his views are related to some selected statements by Plato (and to some data he inherited from traditional mythology) on the same issue. At the same time, Plotinus' treatise on *eros* is an anticipation of the type of hermeneutics that will be practiced more extensively by some Neoplatonists after him (e.g., by Porphyry in *The Cave of the Nymphs* and especially by Proclus in his *Platonic Theology*), one in which characters from traditional myths are taken to be representations of metaphysical entities,[2] which in turn are interpretively traced back to Plato's works.

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[1] Some treatments of the topic in Plato include Robin (1964), Krüger (1963), Friedländer (1958, 32–58), Gould (1963), Rist (1964, 16–55), Schiavone (1965), Reale (1997).

[2] Lamberton (1986), for example, traces the development of a Neoplatonic reading of Homer from Philo to Proclus and its transmission to the Latin Middle Ages (Plotinus is treated at pages 83–107).

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I will begin with a brief account of Plotinus' exegetical relation to Plato in the first section. In the central sections, I will provide a classification of the types of *eros* found in the soul and a summary of the correspondences between several of the mythical characters found in the *Symposium* and some of the elements of Plotinus' metaphysics introduced in the previous chapters. The chapter will end with an account of the substantial character of the *eros* which belongs essentially to the soul and grounds the soul's possibility of ascent to the One.

1 Plotinus as Interpreter of Plato

Needless to say, what I intend to do in this section is not to tackle the complex question of Platonic hermeneutics but only to sketch the main lines of Plotinus' way of reading the dialogues, regardless of whether this reading is correct. The purpose is to be in a position to grasp how his interpretation of Plato on the topic of love relates to his own views on love in the broader context of his metaphysics.

Two basic tenets characterize the general way in which Plotinus reads Plato. First, his interpretation is resolutely doctrinal, that is to say, he is convinced that Plato has positive views and that these views are contained in the dialogues, even if they are not easy to ascertain, as he paradigmatically writes at IV.8 [6] 1.26–28: "What, then, does this philosopher say? He is obviously not saying the same thing everywhere, so that one can easily know what his intention is." Second, he takes Plato's thought to be a systematic unity—a unity whose systematic character, however, is mostly implicit and as such is in need of much explanation.

Plotinus' reading of Plato is filtered through a variety of sources, all likely from within the Greek philosophical tradition,[3] and chronologically both prior and posterior to Plato.[4] At times he positively employs these sources to throw light on what he takes to be Plato's doctrine, while other times he interprets them as unfortunate departures from Plato's original teaching. Aristotle is a good example of both cases. Take the central problem of the nature of Intellect. If on the one hand Plotinus is critical of Aristotle's identification of the first principle with thought thinking itself (*Metaphysics* XII.9.1074b34–35), on the other he makes ample use of this and other Aristotelian doctrines to develop his own views of the hypostasis of Intellect and to make sense of several puzzles about the soul and the sensible world.[5] Moreover, Plotinus often combines Aristotelian strategies with Platonic views in order to clarify a given point. For instance, the possibility of applying the same term to the One and to what derives from it, without falling into either pure univocity or mere equivocity, is supported through a combination of the Aristotelian notion of focal meaning (i.e., the fact that all beings are so named in reference to what is "being" primarily, that is, substance) with the Platonic notion of participation.[6] Other times still Plotinus sees some of his sources as plainly aberrant readings of the Platonic text. This, for instance, is the case of Gnosticism, which comes under attack in the so-called *Großschrift* (i.e., *Enneads* III.8 [30], V.8 [31], V.5 [32], II.9 [33]): see in particular the statements at II.9 [33] 6.24–28 and at VP 16.9–12.[7] Generally it seems fair to say, with Charrue, that Plato is Plotinus' main source and that Plotinus' appreciation of other thinkers is directly proportional to their philosophical proximity to what he takes to be Plato's true teaching.[8]

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[3] While to my knowledge no hard evidence of some non-Hellenic, most notably Indian, influence on Plotinus has ever been presented, the possibility of such an influence is not excluded in principle and the question remains a matter of debate. For a range of opinions on the issue, see Bréhier (1961, 107–133), Armstrong (1936), Rist (1967, 225–229), Wallis (1995, 13–15), Wolters (1982), Lacrosse (2009).

[4] See VP 14.4–16; cf. the *Index fontium* in HS_2 (III, 326–373). General overviews of Plotinus' sources can be found in Charrue (1978, 15–41) and Stamatellos (2007, 3–22); see also Wallis (1995, 16–36), whose account covers also Neoplatonists beyond Plotinus; for shorter accounts see Gatti (1999, 10–14), Lacrosse (1994, 17–20), Pigler (2002, 9–12). On the influence on Plotinus of specific authors and movements see: Graeser (1972) for the Stoics; Szlezák (1979) for

Plotinus does not think of his own philosophy as anything new or particularly original; instead, he refers to himself as a mere interpreter of Plato. Thus, at V.1 [10] 8.10–14 he writes about his own views:[9]

> And [it follows] that these statements of ours are not new; they do not belong to the present time, but were made long ago, not explicitly, and what we have said in this discussion has been an interpretation of them, relying on Plato's writings for evidence that these views are ancient.

Plato and Aristotle; Stamatellos (2007) for the Presocratics. See also the articles collected in *Les Sources de Plotin* (1960).

[5] On the broader topic of Aristotle's influence on Plotinus' conception of Intellect, see especially Szlezák (1979); cf. Armstrong (1960), Rist (1967, 178–180), Wallis (1995, 23–24), Gatti (1999, 11).

[6] See Bussanich (1999, 60–61).

[7] On the *Großschrift* see Roloff (1970), Cilento (1971); on Plotinus' relation to Gnosticism see Elsas (1975), Narbonne (2011), Lacroix and Narbonne (2019).

[8] Charrue (1978, 17–23); see also Rist (1967, 179), Lacrosse (1994, 17–19).

[9] V.1 [10] 8.10–14: Καὶ εἶναι τοὺς λόγους τούσδε [11] μὴ καινοὺς μηδὲ νῦν, ἀλλὰ πάλαι μὲν εἰρῆσθαι μὴ ἀναπεπταμένως, [12] τοὺς δὲ νῦν λόγους ἐξηγητὰς ἐκείνων γεγονέναι [13] μαρτυρίοις πιστωσαμένους τὰς δόξας ταύτας παλαιὰς [14] εἶναι τοῖς αὐτοῦ τοῦ Πλάτωνος γράμμασιν.

This does not mean that Plotinus' philosophy lacks originality, for as Dodds[10] writes,

> Plotinus built his structure very largely out of used pieces, the materials that Greek philosophical tradition presented to him. But the essence of the Plotinian system lies in the new meaning which the whole imposed on the parts; its true originality is not in the materials but in the design (as, indeed, I suspect is the case with every great philosophical system).

Thus, as a reader of Plato, Plotinus chooses carefully the passages that fit his interpretation. For this reason, his interests (and, in fact, the interests of Platonism in general) in Plato's writings have rightly been called "anthological."[11] Accordingly, throughout the *Enneads* Plotinus focuses on a few selected dialogues and, within these, on some key passages, usually paying little attention to the context of these passages in their respective sources.[12]

Are we then to imply that Plotinus is unconcerned with what Plato actually meant? If anything, he constantly refers his readers, more or less explicitly, to the dialogues in order to find textual support for his own views (e.g., I.2 [19] 3.5, II.1 [40] 7.1, III.5 [50] 1.6, III.6 [26] 11.1, III.7 [45] 1.13–16, IV.3 [27] 2–8 against what he takes to be misinterpretations of Plato at IV.3 [27] 1.23–37; see also V.8 [31] 4.51–55, 8.15–20, VI.2 [43] 22.1–3, VI.4 [22] 16.4–7). At the same time, we already saw that he is aware that Plato is not always transparent (e.g., IV.8 [6] 1.26–28) but speaks in riddles (αἰνίττεσθαι: e.g., III.4 [15] 5.4, IV.2 [4] 2.49, VI.2 [43] 22.1, 13), and consequently needs to be explained and clarified (e.g., IV.4 [28] 22.10–12). However, Plotinus' explanations are not philological commentaries or introductions to Plato concerned with the letter of the dialogues (cf. VP 14.19–20), but an interpretation of what he took to be their central meaning.[13]

It will be almost natural for the modern reader to think that such an approach should result in a departure from the letter of Plato's text, but this was by no means readily or unanimously accepted in late antiquity. You will recall Augustine's well-known remark, according to which the philosophies of Plato and of Plotinus are so similar that, knowing that the two thinkers lived at very different times and could not have been contemporaries, one might suppose that the former lived again in the person of the latter (*Contra Academicos* III.18.41, p. 79.8: "ut in hoc ille revixisse putandus sit"). The view that the philosophies of Plato and Plotinus closely resemble each other will immediately be judged as far-fetched unless, as Rist observes, one is willing to concede that "there are certain elements in the thought of Plato himself which, if isolated, will turn him into a proto-Plotinus, if any notion of a rigid Platonic system be maintained."[14]

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[10] Dodds (1960, 2). See also Gatti (1999), Emilsson (2017, 32–34).

[11] Rist (1967, 182). See also Wallis (1995, 22), Gatti (1999, 11), Emilsson (2017, 29–30).

[12] Schwyzer (1970), for instance, has argued that this is the case with Plotinus' interpretation of the *Philebus*.

[13] He probably did this also in light of what he learned from his teacher at Alexandria, Ammonius Saccas (see VP 14.14–16; cf. Gatti 1999, 21).

Now, the possibility of mapping the main structure of the Plotinian system from some isolated Platonic elements will not be considered mere fancy if at least three general conditions are taken into account. The first is that some specific texts from the Platonic corpus are selected in which Plato is either ambiguous or else appears to contradict statements he makes elsewhere. Here "elsewhere" may include not only Plato's writings but also the so-called unwritten doctrines (cf. Chapter 1 note 6).

Secondly, one must allow for the possibility that some philosophical problems that are treated explicitly only in the subsequent tradition of Platonism may in fact be present in Plato at least implicitly. For Plotinus this means that he reads Plato also in light of themes and arguments that were developed by later readers of Plato. Because of this, the relative lack of detailed demonstration of certain theses, even some very important ones (e.g., the clear-cut distinction between corporeal and incorporeal reality), in the *Enneads* does not imply that Plotinus was unable to defend them. Thus, what some readers will see as claims that simply lack argumentative support, for Plotinus were a set of acquired conclusions taken over from the tradition with which he was conversant, especially Philo, Atticus, Numenius, and the Middle Platonists and Neopythagoreans of the previous three centuries.[15]

Thirdly, Plotinus reads Plato with an eminently practical interest in mind. Insofar as the dialogues contain a truth that is universal and permanent, to study them and practice philosophy as it is portrayed in them may lead to the improvement of one's soul. Thus, what we may call a lack of emphasis on a philological or scholarly approach to the dialogues[16] has its positive counterpart in Plotinus' faithfulness to and focus on what he takes to be the core of Plato's teaching, namely, its usefulness in view of improving one's life in the face of particular questions raised by a particular audience. It follows that his reading of Plato is primarily not a historico-critical affair with this or that dialogue, but an active engagement with the Platonic text on the background of questions and objections raised by other philosophical schools of his time and in the context of real conversations. Thus, one may read the *Enneads* as the form that the Platonic dialogue takes in Plotinus, for as Porphyry informs us, at least in some measure they are elaborations of replies to questions asked by an actual audience (see VP 13; cf. 4.10–11), sometimes put in writing only at the insistence of persons close to him (cf. VP 5.5–7).[17]

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[14] Rist (1964, 58); see also Gatti (1999, 21), Reale (2004, VIII, 57). For different attempts at defending the similarity or continuity between Plato's and Plotinus' philosophies, see Findlay (1976), Yount (2014); for a thought-provoking attempt at showing that many of the conclusions shared by later Platonists are already present in Plato, see Gerson (2013a).

[15] For an overview of Plotinus' relation to some of these sources, see Reale (2004, VIII, 30–36). A sketch of Plotinus' Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean sources can be found in Wallis (1995, 30–36); for more detailed accounts of these movements (along with Philo, Atticus, Numenius, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the *Chaldean Oracles*), see Reale (2004, VII). For a detailed exposition of the thought of the so-called Middle Platonists, see Dillon (1996); on the Neopythagoreans, see Kahn (2001, 72–172), Dillon (1996, 341–383); on the broader relation of Pythagoreanism and later Neoplatonism, see O'Meara (1989).

Further help to unravel Plotinus' interpretive strategy is found in Lacrosse, who offers three methodological viewpoints which characterize Plotinus' overall reading of Plato and which we will find at work in *Enneads* III.5 [50]. The first viewpoint is what Lacrosse calls a "sublimated Platonism"; the second, he labels an "objectifying (or ontologizing) and syncretistic exegesis"; and the third is Plotinus' way of reading mythical narratives.[18]

According to Lacrosse, what constitutes the sublimating aspect (or, as he calls it, "déplacement sublimant") of the Plotinian reading of Plato is the fact that Plotinus takes a doctrine of his master "pour élever ses points d'application et purifier ainsi son extension."[19] With respect to our topic, the doctrine in question is Plato's view of love as presented in Socrates' second discourse in the *Phaedrus*. One of the major themes of this discourse is human love, and more specifically the sexual arousal that may be experienced before the beauty of an attractive person (cf. *Phaedrus* 250e1–252c2). Plotinus takes the language of love, through which Socrates in the *Phaedrus* introduces the possibility of a dialectical ascent to the world of Ideas, and extends its reach beyond the sphere of sexuality to describe a mystical experience. Moreover, while the language of dialectic leads the soul to the realm of Intellect but is incapable of taking it any further, the language of love, as well as being instrumental to conceptualize the process of derivation of all reality from a single source, is still at work in the description of the further ascent to the One beyond Intellect, up to the so-called mystical union, as we shall see in the next two chapters.[20] Thus, P. Hadot[21] writes that

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[16] If we are to trust Porphyry, this applies also to Plotinus' composition of his own writings (VP 8). This difference of emphasis is explicit in Plotinus' famous remark about Longinus: "Longinus is a scholar [φιλόλογος], but certainly not a philosopher [φιλόσοφος]" (VP 14.19–20). For a commentary on this remark see Pépin (1992); cf. also Rist (1967, 170–173), O'Meara (1993, 6–7).

[17] See Emilsson (2017, 14–18) for a sketch of Plotinus as a teacher and a writer or philosophy.

[18] Lacrosse (1994, 21–41). On the third viewpoint see also Harrington (1975).

[19] Lacrosse (1994, 30 note 59).

> when Plotinus uses the language of the *Phaedrus* it is not, as it was for Plato, in order to describe human love, but rather immediately to express a mystical experience. For Plotinus, human love is no longer the starting point or first stage in a gradual ascent, but has become a mere term of comparison. It is only a reflection of that genuine love which is infused into the soul by the Good…

In spite of my agreement with this statement by Hadot as far as it goes, I think it would be wrong to infer from it that human love, of which sexuality is a fundamental expression, has no place in Plotinus' view of the ascent. While it is true that the ascent does not *have to* start with sexual love, it certainly *can* move its first steps form there, as Plotinus himself attests (I.3 [20] 2). Thus, although it is true that in Plotinus human love is not the immediate expression of a mystical experience, it *may* certainly direct to such an experience the one who is willing to understand the nature of love at work in sexuality (see also note 35 below).

In addition to this, Lacrosse describes Plotinus' exegesis of Plato as objectifying (or ontologizing) and syncretistic. The chief Plotinian example of the objectifying aspect of this description is the hierarchical classification of the threefold One of the Platonic *Parmenides* in the three Plotinian hypostases, namely, as stated at V.1 [10] 8.25–26: the One as the principal One (i.e., One in the proper sense, the single source of all reality, itself beyond all form and determination), Intellect as the one-many (i.e., the one-which-*is*-one: multiple unity, or Intellect as the ever actual unification of thinking and the multiplicity of the intelligibles or object of thought), and Soul as the one-and-many (i.e., both unity and multiplicity, ever borrowing from Intellect its object of contemplation, which it always approximates dianoetically without ever possessing it in noetic actuality).[22] By syncretically relating these three "ones" to different and seemingly incongruent utterances in the Platonic corpus, Plotinus thinks he is able to overcome the ambiguities found in Plato. Thus, the Good beyond being of *Republic* VI.509b9 is equated to the One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, which is superior and transcends the realm of Intellect and corresponds to Plotinus' One. In contrast, Plato's referring to the Good as still an idea (ἰδέα), albeit the supreme one, throughout *Republic* VI–VII (VI.505a2, 507b5–7, 508e3, VII.517c1, 526e1, 534c1), is taken as an indication that in these passages he is talking, not about the absolutely simple One, but about the one-many, which coincides with Being and corresponds to Plotinus' Intellect.

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[20] Hence Trouillard's often quoted remark: "quand la dialectique a achevé sa tâche, l'amour n'a pas fini la sienne" (Trouillard 1955b, 157).

[21] P. Hadot (1993, 54). See also P. Hadot (1988, 291–293), Pigler (2002, 17).

[22] V.1 [10] 8.25–26: …τὸ πρῶτον ἕν, ὃ κυριώτερον ἕν, καὶ δεύτερον [26] ἓν πολλὰ λέγων, καὶ τρίτον ἓν καὶ πολλά. The first One (i.e., the One) is also called "the absolute One" (τὸ πάντως ἕν and παντελῶς ἕν: VI.2 [43] 9.6 and 30), while the second One (i.e., Intellect) is also called "the One that is" (τὸ ἓν ὄν: VI.2 [43] 9.8, 10.11, VI.4 [22] 11.20); cf. Proclus, *Platonic Theology* I.11.47.10–12: …τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἓν τιθεμένοις, τὸν δὲ νοῦν ἓν πολλὰ, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἓν καὶ πολλά,

This way of reading the Platonic text reaches beyond the *Parmenides*, and as Lacrosse remarks, it is not limited to concepts but extends to mythical figures as well: for instance to the mythological figure of Eros, which Plato alternately conceives as a god (*Phaedrus* 242d9), as a δαίμων[23] (*Symposium* 202d13), and as an affection (πάθος) of the soul (*Phaedrus* 252b2). As we shall see later in this chapter, for Plotinus these seemingly contrasting descriptions of Eros become compatible as he refers them to three different kinds of love.

This brings me to the third viewpoint mentioned by Lacrosse, which constitutes a general key to Plotinus' way of reading mythical narratives such as that of Eros' birth found in the *Symposium*. It is Plotinus himself who gives us this key explicitly at III.5 [50] 9.24–29:[24]

> Now myths, if they are really going to be myths, must both divide temporally the things of which they speak, and separate from each other many

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τὰ δὲ σώματα πολλὰ καὶ ἕν. The references to Plato's *Parmenides* correspond to what traditionally are called the first three hypotheses of the notoriously difficult second part of the dialogue: the absolutely simple One (137c4–142a8), the one which is one with Being, hence a one-many (142b1–155e3; 144e5: ἓν πολλά; cf. Chapter 2 note 58), and the one which is both one and many (155e4–157b5; 155e5: ἕν τε ὂν καὶ πολλά; cf. Chapter 2 note 103). For an extensive treatment of Plotinus' three hypostases in light of his reading of the *Parmenides* see especially Dodds (1928), who first worked out the identification of the One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and the Good of the *Republic* that is at the basis of Plotinus' One or Good (anticipated by Bréhier 1924–1938, II, 59 note 3). See also Rist (1962), Jackson (1967), Charrue (1978, 43–115), Gurtler (1992).

[23] As with ἔρως, henceforth I will transliterate and italicize the term δαίμων (*daimon*), omitting diacritical marks.

[24] III.5 [50] 9.24–29: Δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους, εἴπερ τοῦτο ἔσονται, καὶ μερίζειν [25] χρόνοις ἃ λέγουσι, καὶ διαιρεῖν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων πολλὰ τῶν [26] ὄντων ὁμοῦ μὲν ὄντα, τάξει δὲ ἢ δυνάμεσι διεστῶτα, ὅπου [27] καὶ οἱ λόγοι καὶ γενέσεις τῶν ἀγεννήτων ποιοῦσι, καὶ τὰ [28] ὁμοῦ ὄντα καὶ αὐτοὶ διαιροῦσι, καὶ διδάξαντες ὡς δύνανται [29] τῷ νοήσαντι ἤδη συγχωροῦσι συναιρεῖν. For a similar view in late antiquity, see Sallustius, *On the Gods and the World* IV.9. For an overview of Plotinus' use of some traditional myths, see Pépin (1976, 190–209).

> of the beings which, though existing in unity, are nevertheless distinguished in rank or powers,[25] much like reasoned discourses, too, introduce generations of things ungenerated, and they also separate things that exist in unity.[26] And once myths have fulfilled their didactic function as best as they can, they allow the one who understood them to recompose what was divided.

This passage chiefly clarifies two things. First, myths are not descriptions of factual events, but narrative elaborations of realities whose separation is, rather than spatiotemporal, one of "rank or powers."[27] Secondly, the division operated by myths is not final but propaedeutic; in fact, those who have understood their purpose are enabled to see the unity of that which the mythical account separated.[28]

With this in mind, we may turn to Plotinus' treatise on *eros* to investigate his classification of love and particularly, within it, that connatural love which grounds the individual soul's possibility of ascending to the One.

2 *Enneads* III.5 [50] 1.10–65: *Eros* as an Affection of the Soul; Classification of *Eros*

As Wolters points out, *Enneads* III.5 [50] is neither a lecture nor a mere commentary, but a philosophical inquiry,[29] which takes the mythical figure of Eros as presented in the *Symposium* (particularly in Diotima's account of his birth and fundamental features at 203a9–204c6) as its guiding element for addressing the question: "What is love (*eros*)?" The purpose of the treatise is readily stated in its opening lines: to investigate whether *eros* "is a god, or a *daimon*, or an affection of the soul, or if one is a god or a *daimon* and another an affection, and what kind of thing each is" (III.5 [50] 1.1–3). Unsurprisingly, the main reference is Plato,[30] whose seemingly contrasting utterances on *eros*' nature are here interpreted in a syncretistic way, as I pointed out in the previous section. Therefore, the problem, from here to the end of the treatise, will be to put aside the first, exclusive alternative of the indirect question about *eros* (i.e., whether he is a god, a *daimon*, or an affection of the soul) by showing in what sense the second, more inclusive alternative (i.e., that *eros* is all these things) is to be pursued. After the introductory lines (III.5 [50] 1.1–10), the remaining material in the treatise comprises three major divisions: III.5 [50] 1.10–65 (*eros* as an affection of the soul; classification of *eros*); III.5 [50] 2.1–4.25 (Eros as a god and as a *daimon*); III.5 [50] 5.1–9.57 (Eros as *daimon*, comprising the exegesis of the *Symposium* myth of Eros' birth).

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[25] Cf. III.2 [47] 1.20–26, IV.3 [27] 9.12–20, IV.8 [6] 4.38–42.

[26] Cf. VI.7 [38] 35.27–30.

[27] Wolters (1984, 249) notes that the double καὶ at III.5 [50] 9.24–25 is correlative; its purpose is to "separate and coordinate two related but distinct features of myths: the presentation of 1) the eternal as temporal, and 2) the integral as separated." The same goes for the second and third καὶ at III.5 [50] 9.27.

[28] For this reason, the ὁμοῦ at III.5 [50] 9.26 and 28 does not indicate mere proximity, but interpenetration of what is together, hence my translation of it as "in unity" (cf. III.5 [50] 7.51, 9.14; see Wolters 1984, 211 and 250).

[29] Wolters (1984, xi–xii).

[30] Other sources of Plotinus' dissertation are the θεολόγοι (2.2, 8.21), that is, "ancient cosmogonic poets" (Wolters 1984, 46), probably including Hesiod (*Theogony* 120–122), the

The Platonic text at the basis of the claim that *eros* can be an affection of the soul is Phaedrus 252b1–3, where the experience of love is explicitly qualified as a πάθος: "This affection [πάθος], you beautiful boy, to whom my speech is directed, humans call love [ἔρωτα]."[31] The fundamental thesis of this division (and, in fact, of the whole of treatise III.5 [50]) is not only that *eros* "arises in souls that long to be joined to something beautiful" (III.5 [50] 1.11–12, based on Plato, *Symposium* 204c7–209e4), but more radically that its origin (ἀρχή) is a desire for Beauty itself present in soul (III.5 [50] 1.16–19).[32]

Before I consider this desire for Beauty found in the soul, some brief remarks about the nature of Beauty itself are appropriate. P. Hadot rightly observes that in the first chapter of III.5 [50] desire for Beauty itself is not distinguished from the desire for the Good (cf. III.5 [50] 1.17, 23–24, and 64; cf. I.6 [1] 6.23–24), so that here Plotinus' claim is not unlike the countless instances in which he

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Orphics (frr. 1, 2, 28, 37), and Acusilaus (DK 9.B1–3); see Wolters (1984, 46–48). Cf. Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* I, 132.8–140.24.

[31] In Plotinus the term πάθος is used synonymously with πάθημα (e.g., 1.65; Wolters 1984, 8). I follow ARMSTRONG in rendering both πάθος and πάθημα with "affection." P. Hadot (1990, 97 note 4, 275) translates both terms with "état" and does so "pour souligner le fait que Plotin, en l'empolyant, pense moins à la « passion », à l'émotion, qu'à la modification de l'âme qu'elle représente" (P. Hadot 1990, 97 note 4), whether this modification is in accordance with nature or not (as we shall see in what follows). Hadot's observation is confirmed by some of the translations of πάθος as "accident," "change," "modification" found under the entry πάθος in the lexica I was able to consult: Sophocles (1900), Lampe (1961), Liddell and Scott (1996). To my hear, the English "affection" suffices to render the meanings Hadot rightly wishes to cover (see *Oxford English Dictionary* 1998, sv. "affection, n.[1]" I.1.a).

[32] Beauty itself (αὐτὸ τὸ κάλλος) or, simply, Beauty (here capitalized to avoid equivocation with the plurality of beautiful things participating in it) is obviously a Platonic expression: see Plato, *Parmenides* 134b14–c2, c6–8, *Phaedrus* 250e2, *Greater Hippias* 289d2, 292d3, 304d7, *Republic* V.476c2, 479a1–2; cf. *Symposium* 211e3.

decalres the absolute anteriority[33] of the desire for the Good to all desiring (see Plotinus I.6 [1] 7.1–2, I.7 [54] 1.22, V.5 [32] 12.7–19, VI.5 [23] 1.11–12, VI.7 [38] 33.29, 42.12; cf. Plato, *Philebus* 20d8–9, *Greater Hippias* 297b2–7; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1.1094a2–3). At V.5 [32] 12, in distinguishing more precisely between the desire of the Good and the desire of Beauty, Plotinus emphatically subordinates the latter to the former. He argues that while Beauty is grasped only by those who already know it and have already been painfully awaken to it by *eros* (cf. Plotinus I.6 [1] 4.12–22; Plato, *Phaedrus* 249b6–252c2), the desire for the Good is naturally and gracefully present even to those who are asleep and unaware of it, and this desire is beyond recollection (cf. V.5 [32] 12.11–14). This distinction between Beauty and the Good, however, does not seem to be operative in the first chapter of treatise III.5 [50] (it is perhaps implicit at III.5 [50] 6.29: τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ καλοῦ). Thus, for the text to be free of contradiction, one would have to concede that the connatural *eros* mentioned in this treatise does not coincide with the one presented at V.5 [32] 12. Tentatively, I take the difference between the *erotes* in the two treatises to be based on the various meanings of Beauty in the two contexts. More specifically, the *eros* in V.5 [32] 12 is the desire of Beauty understood technically as an Idea (or as representative of the entire realm of Intellect, as in V.1 [10] 7.27–30, V.8 [31] 1.1–6, VI.2 [43] 18.1–5, VI.7 [38] 18.1–2). By contrast, the *eros* of III.5 [50] is of a more comprehensive kind, since its referent is not only Beauty taken strictly as noetic Beauty, but as: first, an analogue of the Good beyond recollection, true ἀρχή of all *eros* (III.5 [50] 1.17, 23–24, 64); second, the archetypal (noetic) Beauty amenable to recollection (III.5 [50] 1.33, 40); finally, the several images, "here below," of the archetypal Beauty that trigger the possibility of recollection (III.5 [50] 1.26, 35). Parallels on which I base this interpretation include I.6 [1] 6.24–32, 7.14–18, 28–30, 9.37–43, VI.7 [38] 32.24–39, 33.21–22, VI.8 [39] 15.1–2.[34]

To resume our discussion of the desire for Beauty itself present in the soul, we must now ask: What reasons does Plotinus offer for the claim that the presence of this desire for the Good under the aspect of Beauty is something present "formerly" (πρότερον: III.5 [50] 1.17) in the soul, or that it is innate or connatural (σύμφυτος) to it (VI.9 [9] 9.24–26; cf. IV.3 [27] 25.29, V.5 [32] 12.11–14, VI.7 [38] 31.17–18.)? At III.5 [50] 1.17–18 he writes that the presence of Beauty itself to the soul is, or rather grounds, a kind of "recognition, an affinity, and an awareness of kinship [with it] independent of reason" (ἐπίγνωσιν καὶ συγγένειαν καὶ οἰκειότητος ἄλογον σύνεσιν). This recognition occurs as we experience beautiful things, which are taken to be "images" (εἰκών: III.5 [50] 1.26, 35) of Beauty itself, which here, in turn, stands for the noetic realm. The reasoning behind these claims seems to be the following. If we feel a loving transport toward beautiful things, it must be because we recognize something in them that makes them (or makes them appear) beautiful, and hence desirable—beauty being conceived as the intentional object love, such as it is clearly presented in Socrates' speeches on *eros* in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. The factor which allows us to recognize something in things that makes them beautiful is Beauty itself, and things called beautiful are desired precisely as images of it.

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[33] See P. Hadot (1990, 151): "c'est le désir du bien qui a cette antériorité absolue."

[34] For some helpful general remarks on the subject of beauty in Plotinus see Rist (1967, 53–66), Igal (1982–1998, I, 38–39), O'Meara (1993, 88–99), Gerson (1994, 212–218), Corrigan (2005, 216–217), Emilsson (2017, 362–369). For commentaries on Plotinus' two treatises on beauty, see Darras-Worms (2007) and Smith (2016) for I.6 [1], and Smith (2017) for V.8 [31]; on V.5 [32] 12 see Gerson (2013b, 179–187).

Now, the possibility of the recognition of Beauty itself in beautiful things is not merely a product of our encounter with beautiful things, but is itself a prior predisposition naturally found in the soul which is only activated or awaken by the presence of images of Beauty (cf. VI.7 [38] 21–22). Speaking of Eros as the son of Aphrodite (cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 242d9), Plotinus writes that, besides being the guardian of beautiful boys (cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 265c2–3), he also works as the "mover of souls toward the beauty [up] there [ἐκεῖ κάλλος, viz., Beauty itself], or else to increase the already existing impulse toward it [τὴν ἤδη γενομένην πρὸς τὸ ἐκεῖ ὁρμήν]" (III.5 [50] 2.4–6). The predisposition of which I am speaking here is this "already existing impulse." All experiences that we might refer to as erotic have this predisposition to the recognition of Beauty as their common fundamental feature. Thus Plotinus, quickly commenting on *Symposium* 206b1–e6 (and more precisely *Symposium* 206c4–5, clearly alluded to at III.5 [50] 1.28–30), remarks that to generate, both in nature as a whole (III.5 [50] 1.19–24) and in the context of the sexual intercourse of individuals (III.5 [50] 1.26–30), means to generate with Beauty in view, thus also implying that sexual love is a possible springboard toward Beauty itself, and hence, as I mentioned earlier, fundamentally good.[35]

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[35] Wolters (1984, xvi–xxii) speaks of this as a vindication of sexual love in Plotinus. He argues, with Trouillard (1955b, 162) and in partial disagreement with such authors as Friedländer (1958, 55–58), P. Hadot (1993, 56; see note 21 above for further references), and Ferwerda (1965, 90), that sexual love, being rooted in the soul's connatural desire for Beauty, can in fact be the starting point of the soul's ascent to the Good, as Plotinus himself remarks (I.2 [19] 5, I.3 [20] 2, VI.7 [38] 31); cf. Corrigan (2005, 136). P. Hadot (1990, 29) later (the first and second French edition of P. Hadot 1993 are from 1963 and 1973 respectively) recognizes that Wolters is right in insisting on the fundamental goodness of sexual love. For a discussion of the significance and pervasiveness of the sexual theme in Plotinus see Mazur (2009).

The thesis that all *eros* issues from an original desire for Beauty itself is important insofar as it immediately alerts us to the fact that, whatever *eros*' further specifications or distinctions may be, its origin is one and the same. One such distinction was quickly introduced at III.5 [50] 1.10–16 between the *eros* as the desire of "temperate people who are akin to Beauty itself" (σωφρόνων αὐτῷ τῷ κάλλει οἰκειωθέντων: III.5 [50] 1.13), and *eros* as a desire that "wants to issue in some shameful action [εἰς αἰσχροῦ τινος πρᾶξιν]" (III.5 [50] 1.13–14). Another distinction is breached at III.5 [50] 1.30–36 between the *eros* of those who are moved to generate without the recollection (ἀνάμνησιν: III.5 [50] 1.34) of the archetypal Beauty (ἀρχέτυπον: III.5 [50] 1.33) which is at the basis of all beautiful images, and the *eros* of those who do recollect the archetype. These distinctions are then taken over and made sharper at III.5 [50] 1.38–65. The following threefold (or, if one prefers, fivefold) classification of *eros*, which I borrow from P. Hadot,[36] can thus be derived from the text:

- (1) Pure *eros* (III.5 [50] 1.38–39, 46–47, 55–57, 58–59)
  - (a) With recollection (III.5 [50] 1.39–40, 60–62)
  - (b) Without recollection (III.5 [50] 1.40, 59–60)
- (2) Mixed *eros* (III.5 [50] 1.30–36, 40–46, 47–50, 57–58)
  - (a) With recollection (III.5 [50] 1.34–35, 60–62)
  - (b) Without recollection (III.5 [50] 1.32–33, 35–36, 59–60)
- (3) Deviant *eros* (III.5 [50] 1.38, 50–55, 63–65).

In light of this classification, we are called to present Plotinus' justification for three main distinctions: the one between pure (καθαρὸς: III.5 [50] 1.38) and mixed (μέμικται, μικτὸν: III.5 [50] 1.40, 57) *eros*; the one between *eros* according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν: III.5 [50] 1.42) and deviant or unlawful *eros* at variance with nature (ἐν παρανόμῳ καὶ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν: III.5 [50] 1.50); and the one between *eros* with recollection (ἀνάμνησιν: III.5 [50] 1.34; ἀναμιμνήσκειν at III.5 [50] 1.35, 40, 60) and *eros* without recollection. We should not lose sight of the fact that the broader horizon of these distinctions is that of *eros* as an affection of the soul, that is to say, something that the individual soul happens to experience incidentally as it comes in contact with images of Beauty at the sensible level.

Let us begin with the last distinction I mentioned, the one based on the concept of recollection. The discriminating factor between the two kinds of lovers is that those who love without recollection of the archetypal Beauty take images of Beauty for true Beauty, while recollecting lovers appreciate images of Beauty but are capable of recognizing them for what they are, to wit, images (see Plotinus V.8 [31] 8.13–15; II.9 [33] 17.33–38; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 249d5, 250a6–7). Plotinus further notes that the mere fact of not recollecting the archetype and even the fact of being attracted to inferior beauties is free of fault (ἀναμάρτητος: III.5 [50] 1.37). What does constitute fault (ἁμαρτία: III.5 [50] 1.38) according to him is abandonment to sexual intercourse (ἡ δὲ πρὸς μίξιν ἔκπτωσις: III.5 [50] 1.38), which results in a misguided consideration of sensible pleasure as the primary desideratum.

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[36] P. Hadot (1990, 163); cf. Wolters (1984, liii) for a similar division. See also Lacrosse (1994, 70–75).

Nevertheless, the faultlessness of the lack of recollection and of the attraction (to be distinguished from abandonment) to inferior beauties is consistent with Plotinus' guiding principle that the final aim or origin of all *eros* is Beauty itself, so that attraction to its images, even if one is unaware of the archetype, is a tribute to Beauty rather than an immediate error of judgment. More importantly, not only does lack of recollection not mar the purity of one's *eros*, but if *eros* is called pure even in the absence of recollection, recollection itself is not, strictly, an essential aspect of pure *eros* (nor, for that matter, of mixed *eros*).[37]

What, then, makes *eros* pure (the first of our three main distinctions) and distinguishes it from mixed *eros*? Plotinus offers his explanation at III.5 [50] 1.38–50 and elaborates further on it at III.5 [50] 1.55–65. He argues that *eros* is pure when one is "content with beauty alone" (ἀγαπητὸν τὸ κάλλος μόνον: III.5 [50] 1.39), while it is mixed when it is accompanied by "another desire, [viz., the desire] to be immortal as far as it is possible for a mortal" (ἄλλη τοῦ ἀθάνατον εἶναι ὡς ἐν θνητῷ ἐπιθυμία: III.5 [50] 1.40–41, containing a clear allusion to Plato, *Symposium* 206e8). This added desire results in a productive activity in which, like in *Symposium* 206b1–209e4, the lovers aim at perpetuating themselves in kind through sexual union. Thus, one could say that the purity of *eros* consists in its being simply theoretical or contemplative. Accordingly, its mixed character results from an additional element, which for Plotinus is the desire to procreate.

But why is mixed *eros* introduced as an inferior kind of *eros*? That is, why is contemplation alone superior to contemplation plus procreation? One ordinarily tends to shrink from the notion of a purely contemplative love, taking its purity as a polite euphemism for impotence: contemplative love as sterile love. This clearly is not what Plotinus has in mind. After all, as I pointed out in my remarks leading to the discussion of the Principle of Superabundance, one of the reasons for which Plotinus found the concept of *eros* suitable to express the nature of the One may be the fact that the power of the One is not sterile but productive. Therefore, I think that the superiority of pure contemplation over productive contemplation, or of pure *eros* over mixed *eros*, should not be interpreted as contempt for the desire to procreate that characterizes mixed *eros*; for pure *eros* is described as superior to mixed *eros*, not due to the presence of this desire in the latter, but in virtue of its own greater self-sufficiency. The fact that for Plotinus the primordial fecundity of the One expressed in the Principle of Superabundance is one by which the Source generates from the necessity of its very nature—superabundantly—not by reason of some lack or an attraction to something external to it, should suffice to rest my case, I trust. In Plotinus' own words at III.5 [50] 1.46–50:[38]

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[37] A classification similar to the one given above appears at III.5 [50] 7.30–39. Here, however, it is the Good, rather than (noetic) Beauty, that explicitly constitutes the goal of *eros*. Moreover, what in the first chapter of the treatise I called deviant *eros*, in III.5 [50] 7 is barely even referred to as *eros*, but is called "evil desire" (III.5 [50] 7.37: κακαῖς […] ἐπιθυμίαις; but see III.5 [50] 7.42: Οἱ [viz., ἔρωτες]) and is not something that belongs essentially to the soul. For comments on III.5 [50] 7.30–39 see P. Hadot (1990, 223–230).

> Therefore, that which does not want to generate is more self-sufficient with respect to beauty, while that which desires to produce something beautiful wants to do so because of a lack and is not self-sufficient. And if really it should produce something of that sort, it thinks it is self-sufficient only if it is generated in beauty.

The comparative αὐταρκέστερον, at III.5 [50] 1.47, highlights the fact that pure *eros* is not self-sufficient in an absolute sense; after all, no love, insofar as it is intentional, or directed toward an external object, will ever be wholly self-sufficient (cf. Plato, *Symposium* 199e6–200b3). Rather it is "more self-sufficient" than mixed *eros* and other kinds of *eros*, which depend on additional factors besides Beauty. Plotinus' views on this point seem to be in keeping with an observation found at *Symposium* 206e8, where Plato has Diotima state that procreation is that which is everlasting and immortal in what is mortal (ἀειγενές ἐστι καὶ ἀθάνατον ὡς θνητῷ ἡ γέννησις, echoed by Plotinus at III.5 [50] 1.40–41). According to Diotima, procreation is a means to some kind of immortality: the immortality of the species, given that death precludes the immortality of the individual (cf. Aristotle, *De anima* II.4.415a25–b7). The implication seems to be that if something is everlasting and immortal, it does not require procreation to try to perpetuate itself somehow in an individual of the same species, and so what has no need for procreation is more self-sufficient than what does, as Plotinus claims.[39]

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[38] III.5 [50] 1.46–50: Τὸ μὲν οὖν μὴ γεννᾶν [47] ἐθέλον μᾶλλον αὐταρκέστερον τῷ καλῷ, τὸ δὲ ἐφιέμενον [48] ποιῆσαι καλόν τε ἐθέλει ποιεῖν ὑπ' ἐνδείας καὶ οὐκ [49] αὔταρκες· καί, εἴπερ τοιοῦτον ποιήσει, οἴεται, εἰ ἐν καλῷ [50] γεννήσεται. The μᾶλλον at line 47 is pleonastic (Wolters 1984, 29).

Thus, unlike mixed *eros*, all that pure *eros* needs is Beauty, which is precisely what makes it pure and "more self-sufficient." Mixed *eros*, on its part, is not altogether deprived of contemplation. But while pure *eros* is contemplative in an unqualified way (that is, purely, or by simply gazing on, or being content with, Beauty itself), mixed *eros* is so only qualifiedly (that is, mixedly, or as productive of images of Beauty with Beauty in view). When neither of these is the case, we are in the presence of yet a different type of *eros*. As P. Hadot[40] points out, the hierarchy between *erotes* rehearses one of the great Plotinian principles, that "making and action are either a weakening or a consequence of contemplation. […] For who, if he is able to contemplate what is truly real will deliberately go after its image?"[41] (III.8 [30] 4.39–40, 43–44). This is not a manifesto of idleness or, worse, a well-pondered contempt of the sensible realm; if anything, it is an appreciation of the sensible insofar as it is the result of contemplation and as such cannot be evil (as against Gnostic dualism).[42]

We thus come to our final distinction, that between mixed *eros* and unlawful *eros*, here used as shorthand for "unlawful *eros* at variance with nature" (ἐν παρανόμῳ καὶ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν: III.5 [50] 1.50), or "deviant" *eros*. The appellative "deviant" is used to describe this type of *eros* because at III.5 [50] 1.52 Plotinus refers to lovers who have *strayed* from the course in accordance with nature (παράφοροι ἐκ ταύτης [i.e., πορείας]). We saw that the presence of the additional desire for procreation is what introduces a difference in pure *eros*, thus making it mixed. Now, this desire is also what makes of mixed *eros* love in accordance with nature, distinguishing it not only from pure *eros* but also from *eros* at variance with nature.

Thus, just as the presence of desire for self-perpetuation in *eros* introduces a double difference (i.e., mixed *eros* as distinguished from both pure and deviant *eros*), so its absence introduces an ambiguity, namely, the fact that based on the mere lack of the desire for self-perpetuation, the positive identity of *eros* remains hidden. This is a recurrent theme in Plotinian metaphysics: the extreme terms of a hierarchy share the absence of the features proper to the intermediate terms. Thus, as we saw in Chapter 2, the One and matter, which constitutes the antipodes of Plotinus' universe, share for instance the character of formlessness in opposition to the pure form of Intellect and the partial form of soul and ensouled bodies (see I.8 [51] 3.14 and 31, 8.21, II.5 [25] 4.12, VI.7 [38] 33.13, 21, and 37, VI.9 [9] 3.4 and 43).

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[39] From Plotinus' perspective, this interpretation does not contradict the Principle of Superabundance in relation to the hypostases: first, because, as I pointed out, hypostatic generation is a matter of superabundance; second, because in hypostatic generation the generator and the generated entity do not belong to the same species, if they belong to any species at all.

[40] P. Hadot (1990, 159–160).

[41] III.8 [30] 4.39–40, 43–44: τὴν ποίησιν [40] καὶ τὴν πρᾶξιν ἢ ἀσθένειαν θεωρίας ἢ παρακολούθημα. […] [43] Τίς γὰρ θεωρεῖν τὸ ἀληθινὸν δυνάμενος [44] προηγουμένως ἔρχεται ἐπὶ τὸ εἴδωλον τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ.

[42] For a stimulating study of contemplation and its productive character in Plotinus see Gatti (1996).

It follows that a further factor is needed if one is to be able to distinguish deviant *eros* not only from mixed *eros* but, perhaps more importantly, also from pure *eros*. This factor is the soul's attitude toward sensible beauty understood as an image of the archetypal Beauty of Intellect. In the case of pure *eros* the attitude is contemplation, while in the case of deviant *eros* it is an immoderate abandonment to pleasure (III.5 [50] 1.38) resulting in the soul's inability both to recognize the desire to procreate and to use images of Beauty to recollect Beauty itself (III.5 [50] 1.53–55).

However, it is important to realize that for Plotinus all *eros* is essentially good, that is, it primarily indicates a connection to Beauty insofar as the soul, even when *eros* has become deviant, is stirred and attracted by images of Beauty. P. Hadot rightly observes: "Il n'y a pas d'amour substantiellement mauvais."[43] Plotinus' remark that "the desire for good often involves the fall into evil" (ἡ ἀγαθοῦ ἔφεσις ἔχει εἰς κακὸν τὴν ἔκπτωσιν πολλάκις: III.5 [50] 1.63–64)[44] does not invalidate but confirms Hadot's observation, since it points to the fact that even deviant *eros* is still rooted in the primary desire of Beauty itself connatural to soul.

In short, for Plotinus *eros* as an affection (πάθος) of the soul is a single phenomenon that can manifest itself in the three types of *eros* presented above—pure, mixed, and deviant—hence the use of the plural (παθήματα) in the closing line of the chapter, III.5 [50] 1.65.

3 *Enneads* III.5 [50] 2.1–9.57: Identification of the Mythical Entities

Plotinus' way of reading myths, together with the other exegetical strategies of sublimation, ontologization and syncretism outlined in the first section of the present chapter, clearly comes to the fore in chapters 2–9 of treatise III.5 [50]. There he focuses his explanation of Plato's seemingly conflicting affirmations about *eros* on the descriptions of Eros as a god and son of Aphrodite (Plato,

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[43] P. Hadot (1990, 163).

[44] ARMSTRONG's translation.

Phaedrus 242d9 and *Symposium* 180d3–e3 respectively) and as a *daimon* with a different set of parents (Plato, *Symposium* 202d13, 203a9–204c6).

Before we tackle Plotinus' own reading of Plato's text, it may be convenient to report the passages from the *Symposium* where these mythical entities are mentioned. Here is the story of Eros' birth as told by Plato at *Symposium* 203b2–e5 (the translation is mine):

> Well, when Aphrodite was born, the gods had a banquet, both the others and Poros [i.e., Passage, Resourcefulness] son of Metis [i.e., Counsel, Wisdom]. After they dined, Penia [i.e., Poverty, Want] came begging, just as [it happens] when there is a feast, and she was near the door. Now, Poros, entering Zeus' garden drunk with nectar—for wine did not exist yet—[and] since he was weighed down [with drink], lay down to sleep. So Penia, planning to have a child from Poros due to her own resourcelessness [ἀπορίαν], lay down by him and conceived Eros. Just for this reason Eros has been a follower and a servant [ἀκόλουθος καὶ θεράπων] of Aphrodite, because he was begotten during her birthday celebrations, and at the same time he is by nature a lover of beauty [φύσει ἐραστὴς ὢν περὶ τὸ καλὸν], and since Aprohrodite is beautiful. So, insofar as he is son of Poros and Penia, Eros has such a fate. First, he is always poor [πένης], and far from delicate and beautiful [καλός], as most people think, but [is rather] hard, and rough, and barefoot, and homeless [ἄοικος], always lying on the ground and without a bed, going to sleep on doorsteps and on streets in the open air, since he has his mother's nature, ever associated with want [ἐνδείᾳ σύνοικος]. In conformity with his father, on the other hand, he is a schemer after the beautiful and the good [ἐπίβουλός ἐστι τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς], being courageous, and bold, and earnest, a skillful hunter, always contriving some devices, [and] a desirer of wisdom [φρονήσεως ἐπιθυμητὴς] and resourceful [πόριμος], philosophizing [φιλοσοφῶν] through all his life, a wonderful enchanter and sorcerer, and a sophist; by nature he is neither immortal nor mortal, but sometimes in the same day he blooms and lives, whenever he is resourceful [εὐπορήσῃ], and sometimes he dies but then comes back to life due to his father's nature; and what he procures for himself [ποριζόμενον] always slips away, so that Eros is neither lacking [ἀπορεῖ] nor wealthy [πλουτεῖ], and further, he is in between wisdom and ignorance [σοφίας, τε αὖ καὶ ἀμαθίας ἐν μέσῳ ἐστίν].

And here is Pausanias' division of Aphrodite and Eros given by Plato at *Symposium* 180d3–e3 (the translation is again mine):

> For we all know that there is no Aphrodite without Eros [οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ Ἔρωτος Ἀφροδίτη]. Therefore, if she were one, Eros [too] would be one. But since there are two [Aphrodite], there must be also two Eros. And how are the goddesses not two? One is somewhat older and motherless, Uranus' daughter, whom we also name Heavenly [Οὐρανίαν]; the other is younger, [daughter] of Zeus and Dione, whom we call Vulgar [Πάνδημον]. It follows necessarily that Eros who is coworker [συνεργὸν] of the latter is rightly called Vulgar [Πάνδημον], and the other Heavenly [Οὐράνιον].

The classification of the results of Plotinus' exegesis of the mythical data he inherited from Plato and from traditional sources of myths (cf. note 30 above and note 46 below) was first suggested by Ficino in his 1475 *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (VI.7) and has been retrieved and variously exploited by Wolters, Lacrosse, and, more systematically, by P. Hadot, whose main conclusions I follow.[45]

The leading principle of Plotinus' exegesis is that "all soul is Aphrodite" (ἔστι πᾶσα ψυχὴ Ἀφροδίτη: VI.9 [9] 9.31, my translation). With this principle in mind, the multiplication of mythical characters follows from the double parenthood of both Eros and Aphrodite in the *Symposium*. On the one hand, we have the duplicity of the figure of Aphrodite, who is divided by Pausanias[46] in heavenly (*Urania*) and earthly (or vulgar in the etymological sense of "popular": *Pandemos*) based on her parenthood: Uranus in the first case, Zeus and Dione in the second (III.5 [50] 2.14–32; cf. Plato, *Symposium* 180c3–e3). On the other hand, we have the duplicity of Eros, who is at once son of Aphrodite, hence either heavenly (III.5 [50] 2.33–3.26) or earthly (III.5 [50] 3.27–4.25) depending on the nature of his mother (see again Plato, *Symposium* 180c3–e3), and of Poros and Penia (III.5 [50] 5.1–7.58), who conceived him on the day of Aphrodite's birth in Zeus' garden as Poros was drunk with nectar (III.5 [50] 8.1–9.23; cf. Plato, *Symposium* 203b2–c4). Notice that for Plotinus the duality of Aphrodite and her corresponding Eros is not one of moral opposition (as it seemed to be in Pausanias' discourse in the *Symposium*), but rather of ontological subordination. Therefore, the appellative *Pandemos* should not be taken in the pejorative sense it has for Pausanias.[47]

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[45] Wolters (1984, xxiv–xxvii), P. Hadot (1990, 40–65), Lacrosse (1994, 41–64).

[46] Notice that Plotinus finds useful elements for his exegesis of Plato not only in Socrates' statements, but also in those of other characters in the dialogue. This is a clear sign of the syncretistic aspect of his exegesis. Extra-Platonic sources on the duplicity of Aphrodite may include: Hesiod, *Theogony* 190–200; Homer, *Iliad* V.311–372; Xenophon, *Symposium* 8.9–10; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* IX.16.3–4.

[47] See P. Hadot (1990, 46–48, and 116 note 137).

Plotinus reshapes the seemingly conflicting identities of these mythical characters and elements to fit his metaphysics. Thus, Aphrodite *Urania* corresponds to the Soul-Hypostasis, here referred to as Soul alone or Soul simply (μόνον ψυχὴ, ἁπλῶς ψυχὴ: III.5 [50] 3.31); her Eros is the god Eros, divine insofar as he is always directed to the superior hypostasis of Intellect (here represented by Cronus), which in turn derives from and is directed to the Good or the One (here represented by Uranus).[48] Aphrodite *Pandemos*, on the other hand, corresponds to the World-Soul (or soul of the cosmos), in turn divided in a superior (divine) and in an inferior (*daimonic*) part. The superior part is actually the particular intellect of the World-Soul (here represented by Zeus[49] and probably interpreted as identical with the Platonic Demiurge of the *Timaeus*) ever contemplating Intellect (i.e., again, Cronus).[50] More precisely, the World-Soul is the individual soul that belongs to the particular intellect of Zeus, in accordance with the principle that every particular intellect (represented by a male god) expresses itself, or is connected to, an individual soul (represented by a goddess: III.5 [50] 8.19–20). This connection is expressed both by a father-daughter relation (hence Aphrodite as the daughter of Zeus: III.5 [50] 8.11–17) and by a husband-wife relation (hence the identification of Aphrodite with Hera, Zeus' spouse, also attested in the myths: III.5 [50] 8.22–23).[51] Thus, strictly, what is generally referred to as the World-Soul, much like every individual rational soul, is actually a complex entity made up of two parts, or rather aspects: a superior one permanently connected to the realm of Intellect via the Soul-Hypostasis, and an inferior one, the psychic part proper, directed to the care of the material cosmos. Given that in III.5 [50] the character of Zeus is used consistently to represent the superior part, and Hera is mentioned only once clearly in reference to the inferior part, it would have been convenient to have Aphrodite Pandemos constantly represent the World-Soul as a whole, but Plotinus' usage does not seem to be wholly transparent on this point as far as I can tell (cf. III.5 [50] 2.17, 3.30–31, 8.14–17).

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[48] Plotinus' likely source of the identifications of Cronus and of Aphrodite Urania's contemplation of it (and, arguably, of Zeus and Uranus as well) is Plato's *Cratylus* 396b3–c3, which reads: "And that he [viz., Zeus] is the son of Cronus may seem outrageous [ὑβριστικὸν] to one who hears it for the first time, but it is reasonable that Zeus be the offspring of a great intelligence [διανοίας]: for *koros* [κόρον] means, not a child [παῖδα], but his purity [τὸ καθαρὸν] and unmixedness of Intellect [ἀκήρατον τοῦ νοῦ]—and he [viz., Cronus] is son of Uranus, as the story [λόγος] goes; and again, it is right that the vision toward the above [ἐς τὸ ἄνω ὄψις] is called with the name '*urania*' [οὐρανία], for it looks at the things above [ὁρῶσα τὰ ἄνω], and just from there, Hermogenes, the astronomers say that comes the purity of intellect [τὸν καθαρὸν νοῦν], and that the sky [τῷ οὐρανῷ] was rightly given its name" (my translation). For detailed comments on the characters mentioned in this passage see P. Hadot (1990, 46–61, 235–240; 1981).

[49] Plotinus' source for the identification of Zeus is again Plato: *Phaedrus* 246e4–6, *Philebus* 30d1–3, *Letters* II.312e1–3.

[50] Elsewhere, at IV.4 [28] 10.1–4, Plotinus explicitly associates Zeus with the figure of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* (see especially 29d7–31a1; relevant passages of the *Timaeus* referred or alluded to by Plotinus in relation to this issue include 37c7, 39e7–9, 41a7–8, 69c3). Other important passages on the Demiurge in Plotinus are II.1 [40] 5.1–8, II.3 [52] 18.15 (νοῦς δημιουργός), III.2 [47] 1.1–26, IV.4 [28] 9.1–9, V.9 [5] 3.20–30; cf. also II.4 [12] 7.9–14, II.9 [33] 6, IV.8 [6] 1.40–50, V.1 [10] 8.5–6, V.8 [31] 8.9. The issue concerning the identity of the Demiurge in Plotinus is complex, in part due to the tortured hermeneutics of the *Timaeus* story itself in antiquity. For short sketches of the problem, see Zandee (1961, 24–26), Wallis (1995, 34–36), Gerson (1994, 56–58), Reale (2004, VIII, 145); for more recent contributions on the issue, see Montet (2000), Opsomer (2005). It seems safe to maintain an identification of the Demiurge with Zeus, in turn standing for the intellect of the World-Soul, at least in *Enneads* III.5 [50].

Since the two parts of the World-Soul are divine and *daimonic*, the corresponding quality of their *Eros* will also be divine and *daimonic*,[52] or *Uranius* and *Pandemos* respectively.[53] The other *daimons* we find in the myths are interpreted as traces of Soul into the cosmos (III.5 [50] 6.24–27) and are thus associated with the inferior part of the World-Soul. However, they differ from Eros insofar as they spring from Soul for the sake of the administration of the cosmos (III.5 [50] 6.30–35, 7.26–36), while the major feature of Eros as a *daimon*, even when he is involved in the promotion of marriages, is to direct the souls in love toward the recollection of higher realities (see III.5 [50] 3.30–38, 6.28–30, 7.30–36; cf. III.4 [15] 3). Finally, we must observe that this division of the World-Soul in two parts (i.e., Zeus as its intellect and Aphrodite-Hera as its corresponding soul) is mirrored in the structure of individual rational souls.

One will object that this reading does not account for the fact that *eros* as an affection (or better, as three different types of affections) of the soul treated in the first chapter of treatise III.5 [50] has no mythological equivalent. I assume that this is because its third type (i.e., deviant *eros*) can never be ascribed to the World-Soul, whose great power for Plotinus allows it permanently to keep its sight on higher realities (see II.9 [33] 2, IV.3 [27] 4.21–37, IV.8 [6] 7.23–32).

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[51] See Pausanias, *Description of Greece* III.13.9; (Pseudo-) Timaeus of Locris, *On the Nature of the World and the Soul* 96e. See P. Hadot (1990, 236–240) for a detailed account of this identification.

[52] An alternative interpretation of Plotinus' exegesis takes the double Aphrodite (Urania and Pandemos) as two levels of the World-Soul, the superior or separate one, and the inferior one linked to the body of 'the cosmos on the model of the embodied human soul (see Igal 1982–1998, II, 128 note 36; cf. Plotinus II.3 [52] 9.31–47). For an assessment and dismissal of this interpretation, see P. Hadot (1990, 51–55).

[53] On the close connection between divine and *daimonic* love, cf. I.2 [19] 6.1–11, I.6 [1] 7.19–21.

However, I find nothing to prevent us from ascribing the first two types of *eros* as an affection of the soul (i.e., pure and mixed *eros*) to the Soul-Hypostasis and the World-Soul respectively. More specifically, the *eros* of the Soul-Hypostasis (i.e., Aphrodite Urania) and of the particular intellect of the World-Soul, or of its superior part (i.e., Zeus), will be pure and divine, while that of its inferior part, or of the soul belonging to this intellect (i.e., Aphrodite-Hera), will be mixed and *daimonic*.[54] However, to ascribe pure *eros* to the Soul-Hypostasis and to the intellect of the World-Soul is legitimate provided that we keep in mind that the status of *eros* in this context is not, strictly, that of an affection (πάθος, πάθημα), as it appears to be the case, by contrast, in the first chapter of III.5 [50]. The reason for calling *eros* an affection in the first chapter seems to be not only the need to make sense of Plato's claim about *eros* in this regard (*Phaedrus* 252b2), but above all the fact that *eros* reaches the embodied soul's awareness mainly as a result of an accidental encounter with images of Beauty at the sensible level.

As for Poros and Penia, they represent two aspects of Aphrodite, the soul. On the one hand, Poros is *logos*, the very presence of Intellect in soul, or soul insofar as it is informed by Intellect.[55] Penia, on the other hand, is matter, receptacle of *logos* and symbol of privation and indigence, or, more specifically, of a yet undetermined desire for the Good, "an indeterminate and indefinite representation" (ἀόριστον καὶ ἄπειρον φάντασμα: III.5 [50] 7.8).[56] The *daimon* Eros, springing from the intercourse of these two aspects, reflects the diversity of his parents (III.5 [50] 7.12–25). The relation of Penia to Poros, whereby Eros is engendered, is that of matter to form, a hylomorphic intercourse which represents, in P. Hadot's words, "la loi fondamentale de la genèse de toute réalité, un schéma d'explication universel."[57] Lastly, the garden and nectar (Plato, *Symposium* 203b5–7) are further representatives of *logos*, which as we just saw is the presence of Intellect in soul (Plotinus III.5 [50] 8.4–5, 9.5–23 and 34–37).[58]

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[54] Cf. P. Hadot (1990, 53–60).

[55] Lacrosse (1994, 59). Cf. Porphyry, *Sententiae* 37, particularly 45.5–9.

[56] Plotinus normally associates poverty, or lack (πενία), with lower or sensible matter: see I.8 [51] 3.16, 5.21, 24, 14.35–36 (a clear allusion to *Symposium* 203b4), II.4 [12] 16.19–23, III.6 [26] 14.5–17 (in this passage the association is explicitly with the Platonic character, Penia, to which I will turn shortly), VI.7 [38] 12.22. By contrast, the matter at issue in III.5 [50] is not sensible but intelligible (Ὕλεν [...] νοητὴν: 6.44). However, doubts remain as to whether the intelligible matter mentioned in this treatise corresponds to the one treated technically in II.4 [12] chapters 2–5 and 15–16. Armstrong remarks that intelligible matter here is to be understood as "an intermediate stage between complete incorporeality and material embodiment," of which we find antecedents in Plato (*Epinomis* 984d8–e5) and Aristotle (*Metaphysics* VII.10.1036a9–12, VIII.6.1045a33–35; cf. *Generation of Animals* III.11.761b8–22), but which is found nowhere else in Plotinus (Armstrong III, 189 note 2; echoed by Reale, in Radice 2002, 622 note 34; cf. also O'Brien 1991, 83 note 25, and Narbonne 2011, 46–47). Against this view, Wolters (1984, 168) cites I.2 [19] 2.19–22, where corporeal and intelligible matter differ "only in degree." Strictly, therefore, what matter indicates here is not corporeality, but indetermination (ἀοριστία: III.5 [50] 7.6, 18). Similarly, intelligible matter indicates, not soul *tout court* as Bréhier (1924–1938, III, 82 note 1) briefly states, but intelligible indetermination. Consequently, and again strictly, the opposite of "material" is not "intelligible," but "thoroughly determined." It follows that the intelligible realm (inclusive of intelligible matter), to which soul has access, is opposed to the sensible insofar as it is incorporeal, not insofar as it is immaterial, for

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In the context of this account of the correspondence between mythical and metaphysical entities, it may be worth touching briefly on Pigler's interpretation of the figure of Penia,[59] not only because it bears directly on the reading of *Enneads* III.5 [50], but also because it may shed some light on the interplay between lower and higher soul which I analyzed in the previous chapter. As we saw, every generated hypostasis is erotically directed toward the hypostasis that generated it. Love is thus conceived as what arrests or reverts the flux of procession by introducing a movement contrary to it. At the same time, it is on the basis of this love that a hypostasis can emerge as that particular hypostasis, from which the procession of reality continues to unfold. So, as I argued in my discussion of Intellect, it is because in its incipient stage Intellect is love directed toward the One (Loving Intellect) that in a successive stage it can emerge as the thinking hypostasis (Thinking Intellect), whose thought is the noetic fragmentation of the unity it contemplates in its loving stage. Something analogous happens with soul. The double direction in which the third hypostasis is spread out (i.e., toward the intelligible and toward the sensible) implies that the love of the higher soul differs from that of the lower one and that as a hypostasis soul has not one but two types of love. The love of the

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materiality here means indetermination, and Plotinus speaks both of an intelligible and of a corporeal or sensible indetermination: intelligible and sensible matter respectively. Wolter's observation on the equivalence of matter and indetermination is correct, I maintain, but I do not think that one has to reject Armstrong's claim on the peculiar character of the intelligible matter mentioned at III.5 [50] 6.44 in order to agree with Wolters. Igal (1982–1998, II, 134 note 64), for example, appears to follow Armstrong as he claims that the intelligible matter found in III.5 [50] is not the one treated technically at II.4 [12] 2–5 but is a kind of "materia psíquica" represented by Penia (III.5 [50] 7.1–9, 9.48–53), which in this context is an aspect of the soul connected to the *daimon* Eros. At the same time, Igal holds that this "psychic matter" stands for the indetermination of the lower soul, thus not rejecting the equation between matter and indetermination voiced by Wolters..

[57] P. Hadot (1990, 73).

[58] Cf. P. Hadot (1990, 77–81).

[59] Pigler (2002, 180–198, 208).

higher soul is wholly and permanently directed toward Intellect as its generator and, through it, to the One (cf. VI.7 [38] 35.19–45). This love is the pure *eros* that belongs most properly to Aphrodite *Urania* in Plotinus' interpretation of the mythical data from the *Symposium* (cf. III.5 [50] 2.19–32). By contrast, the love of the lower part is not unequivocally directed to the intelligible realm and the One but, upon receiving from the superior soul a report, as it were, of the latter's contemplation of Intellect, organizes lower matter into a cosmos in accordance with that report (IV.3 [27] 12.30–32). Thus, through soul the sensible is able to participate, if only in a distant manner, in the intelligible. The activity of the lower soul, insofar as this attempts to externalize a superior unity which it is unable to replicate within itself, is like a will of independence from Intellect, although the activity itself occurs naturally as part of the process of derivation.

Now, in her interpretation of the figure of Penia, Pigler argues that intelligible matter can be understood as meaning two related things: on the one hand, it is the primary otherness derived from the One, or the love that constitutes Intellect in its loving stage; on the other hand, it is what remains of this product once the hypostases have achieved the status of complete and separate realities.[60] This "left over" or remainder, after both Intellect and the Soul-Hypostasis have constituted themselves as complete and separate realities, is also love, *eros*, but of a kind whose intensity is insufficient to revert toward the reality above it so as to be informed and thus constituted as a separate hypostasis.

Mainly on the basis of III.5 [50] 7 (especially lines 1–9) and III.8 [30] 5 (especially lines 10–17), Pigler identifies intelligible matter in its last degree of procession with the lower soul (i.e., the World-Soul or Nature), and thinks that in Plotinus' reading of the *Symposium* myth of Eros' birth the remainder of which I just spoke is represented by Penia. As Pigler[61] puts it,

> Pénia est donc le *surplus*, le *reste*, inhérent à toute information par la réalité supérieure, elle représente l'*excédent* de la puissance infinie et indéterminée, de la proto-vie qui n'a pas trouvé place dans le processus

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[60] Pigler (2002, 181): "la matière intelligible peut donc se comprendre, d'une part, comme le produit dérivé de l'Origine absolue, la proto-vie, d'autre part, comme ce qui *reste* de ce produit de fois que les hypostases se sont constituées en réalités achevées et séparées." See also note 56 above.

[61] Pigler (2002, 184). Commenting on III.5 [50] 7, Dillon (1969, 35) already observed about Penia: "She is the as yet unformed Soul, animated by a vague desire for self-fulfillment." However, it is not clear to me that the indetermination that permanently characterizes it "must in fact correspond to the 'noetic matter' postulated in *Enn.* II.4" (Dillon 1969, 36); see my references to ARMSTRONG and Igal (1982–1998) in note 56 above.

> eidétique de constitution de l'hypostase, elle est cette pure énergie érotique qui sourd de l'Un et qui n'a pas pu s'achever en réalité eidétique.

We thus find here a hierarchy of decreasing intelligible unity from Intellect down to the lower soul, with Intellect as both thinking (νοῦς) and object of thought (νοητόν), the higher soul or Soul-Hypostasis as only intellectual (νοερά; cf. II.9 [33] 1.32) by constantly contemplating Intellect, and the lower soul or Nature as having no thought of its own but receiving it from its higher generator, the Soul-Hypostasis, like a report of which it never loses sight and on whose basis it brings order to lower matter. Within this framework, what the higher soul communicates to the lower one is a kind of blueprint of its contemplation of Intellect, a light beam which brings with itself intelligible content and which Plotinus identifies with *logos* (see III.2 [47] 16.13–17; a mythical version of this explanation can be found at V.1 [10] 7.30–37). In treatise III.5 [50] the product of *logos* is not so much a multiplicity of derivative *logoi* in the lower soul, but *eros* itself: an imperfect *eros* lacking what it desires (III.5 [50] 7.12–14), to be sure, in contrast with the *eros* of Intellect and the *eros* of the Soul-Hypostasis, each possessing its desideratum according to its proper mode of being. The imperfection of the *eros* of the lower soul is due to the fact that it issues from a *logos*, that of the higher soul, which is not itself the perfect *logos* of Intellect but is derived from it (III.5 [50] 7.18–19).[62]

Thus, Pigler[63] writes that

> dans l'ordre de la procession des hypostases, l'unité est le fruit d'une plus grande aptitude *à penser* et *à se penser*. Cependant, nous savons aussi que, dans l'ordre de la conversion, ce qui détermine le plus grand rapprochement avec le Bien, et même l'union au Bien, est la plus grande pureté de l'*amour*, un amour qui *doit* être supérieur à la pensée puisque l'Un qui s'aime lui-même est ὑπερνόησις.

According to Pigler, this means that for Plotinus the greatest resemblance with the Good does not take place in the field of thought, but in that of love. And if for soul to love Intellect as its proper desideratum means to acquire a certain (dianoetic) unity in thought, Intellect already points to the One as the supreme desideratum, the most lovable (ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15), with which I will deal in the next chapter. This

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[62] Pigler (2002, 180) calls the *eros* of the lower soul "*l'ultime trace* du Principe que l'Âme *donne* à l'obscurité qui vient après elle."

[63] Pigler (2002, 186).

eros of the soul which, in contemplating Intellect, is further directed to the One, is called divine, and belongs to the soul essentially (III.5 [50] 3.19–23). As I will argue in the next section, without this love, the soul would be unable to see its true goal, the Good. This is the love of a pure soul, properly belonging to the Soul-Hypostasis and ever directed toward the One. And as Pigler argues, when soul is wholly directed in this way toward the One, it is similar not so much to the fully formed hypostasis of Intellect, but to Intellect in its loving state, Loving Intellect, always united with its object (see VI.7 [38] 35.30–41). It is only because of this prior tendency, or this "eye" already filled with vision, as Plotinus calls it at III.5 [50] 3.13, that soul can be directed to Intellect and, by dianoetically contemplating it, become a fully formed hypostasis. But prior to this formation, soul, like Intellect in its incipient state, is love naturally directed toward the Good.[64] This love is both indeterminate, insofar as it has not, or not yet (again, logically rather than chronologically), broken down discursively or dianoetically the content of its vision, and filled with its desideratum, insofar as it is directed toward it without reservations. The proper goodness of this love lies not so much in the possibility of being informed, thus putting an end to its indetermination, as in the very fact of being thoroughly taken up in its vision, thoroughly possessed by what it desires.

By contrast, the *eros* of the lower soul, or of Penia, is by nature deficient (III.5 [50] 7.1–19). Its goodness is not derived from its indetermination, as was the case with the *eros* of higher realities, but from the fact that its indetermination can be informed or given a limit. This means that the lower soul, Penia, has the vague presentiment that its good lies in the One (V.5 [32] 12.8, VI.7 [38] 29.21), but it is unable to revert upon itself to synthesize the intelligible contents it receives from above, thus failing to establish itself as an independent hypostasis. As a consequence, the lower soul is still a trace of the One, but it orients its unsatisfied and restless *eros* (III.7 [45] 11.20–21) creatively outside of itself by generating the temporal realm, on which it bestows the intelligible content that it was unable to hold wholly and stably within itself. Accordingly, the World-Soul or Nature is a creative power active in the sensible. As Pigler[65] remarks, referencing *Enneads* IV.4 [28] 13.3–14,

> l'engendrement du sensible est, quant à lui, l'effet d'une insatisfaction propre à l'Âme inférieure qui reproduit dans le sensible les *logoi* qu'elle ne peut contenir en elle-même. Pour le dire autrement, cette Âme exprime

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[64] See Pigler (2002, 186–188).

[65] Pigler (2002, 192).

> le dernier degré nécessaire de la procession pour qu'il puisse y avoir, après elle mais venant d'elle, un monde sensible.

For this reason, in the case of the lower soul we can speak of production rather than hypostatic procession, although production of a necessary kind (cf. III.8 [30] 4.18–27).[66] Strictly, although the lower soul does not proceed from the higher soul as a hypostasis, it is necessarily linked to it by its *eros*, and through this *eros* it is connected to the original love of the One. The position and function of the lower soul, therefore, is an intermediary one: on the one hand, the lower soul is directed toward what lies above it as it tries to imitate the higher soul's contemplation of Intellect; on the other, this imitation occurs externally as the organization (i.e., the illumination and care treated in Section 3 of Chapter 2) of the sensible in accordance with that contemplation. For this reason, we can say that its *eros* is inextricably double: both for higher realities and for the sensible.

4 The Substantiality of *Eros*: Observations on Some Passages of *Enneads* III.5 [50]

The goal of this section is to clarify the content of some closely related passages which, with an eye to the connatural *eros* of which I spoke earlier and the return journey of the soul to the One to be treated in the next two chapters, I take to be the philosophical core of Plotinus' treatise on *eros*. These passages can be gathered under three headings: *eros* as ὑπόστασις and οὐσία generated from another ὑπόστασις and οὐσία (III.5 [50] 2.32–39 and 3.1–5); the illustration of Eros as the eye of Aphrodite, the soul (III.5 [50] 2.39–46 and 3.6–19); the parallel between *eros* and thoughts (III.5 [50] 7.46–58).

I will begin with a summary clarification of the two key terms, ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, which are at the center of the discussion of our first set of passages. Given the difficulty in providing a single rendering for each term, here I will simply transliterate and italicize them, omitting diacritical marks. Plotinus writes at III.5 [50] 2.32–39:[67]

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[66] See Pigler (2002, 192–193 note 1).

[67] III.5 [50] 2.32–39: Ἐφεπομένη [33] δὴ τῷ Κρόνῳ ἤ, εἰ βούλει, τῷ πατρὶ τοῦ Κρόνου [34] Οὐρανῷ ἐνήργησέ τε πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ᾠκειώθη καὶ ἐρασθεῖσα [35] Ἔρωτα ἐγέννησε καὶ μετὰ τούτου πρὸς αὐτὸν βλέπει, καὶ [36] ἡ ἐνέργεια αὐτῆς ὑπόστασιν καὶ οὐσίαν εἰργάσατο, καὶ [37] ἄμφω ἐκεῖ βλέπει, καὶ ἡ γειναμένη καὶ ὁ καλὸς Ἔρως ὁ [38] γεγενημένος ὑπόστασις πρὸς ἄλλο καλὸν ἀεὶ τεταγμένη [39] καὶ τὸ εἶναι ἐν τούτῳ ἔχουσα…

> Now, following upon Cronus, or, if you will, upon Cronus' father, Uranus, she [i.e., Aphrodite] turned her activity toward him and established a kinship with him, and being in love with him, she engendered Eros and with Eros she looks toward him, and her activity produced a *hypostasis* and an *ousia*, and the two look upward,[68] both she who gave birth [i.e., Aphrodite, or Soul] and the beautiful Eros who was born as a *hypostasis* ever ordained toward another Beautiful [i.e., Cronus, or Intellect] and having its being in it…

The first point in need of clarification concerns the word *hypostasis*. Since in the jargon of Plotinian scholarship this term is often conventionally used, if not strictly reserved, to denote the three hierarchically ordered principles of all reality (i.e., the One, Intellect, and Soul),[69] and since Plotinus is emphatic about the fact that there are only three such principles (see II.9 [33] 1.12–16, 2.1), one would be justified in asking whether when he calls *eros* a *hypostasis* he is contradicting himself. That the answer to this question must be negative can be easily ascertained, first, by verifying whether Plotinus himself refers to these three principles as *hypostases*, and second, by a quick look at how the term *hypostasis* is used in the *Enneads*. Now, Plotinus' term of choice to identify the One, Intellect, and Soul is often ἀρχή rather than *hypostasis* (e.g., II.9 [33] 1.13, III.5 [50] 7.16, III.8 [30] 9.4, V.1 [10] 9.23–24, V.2 [11] 1.1, V.3 [49] 15.23, 27, 16.7, 13, 38, V.4 [7] 1.12, V.8 [31] 7.44, VI.8 [39] 19.16, VI.9 [9] 5.24, 6.35).[70] Even when the three principles are in fact referred to as *hypostases*, the noun *hypostasis* is usually modified in one way or another (e.g., III.4 [15] 1.1–3; VI.2 [43] 4.17: νοητὴν ὑπόστασιν; II.9 [33] 1.41: πλειόνων ὑποστάσεων).[71] This may be an indication that, even when used technically, the term has a much broader field of application than the so-called three *hypostases*.[72] The point, therefore, is not to deny that Soul, Intellect, and the One are *hypostases*, but that the term *hypostasis* is not restricted to these three. Ultimately, *hypostasis* in Plotinus means the existence that any given thing has independently of what, added to it accidentally (whether actually or in thought), is not part of its essence, whose account is as accurate as it is proximate to what he takes to be Plato's understanding of it.[73]

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[68] Cf. Plato's *Cratylus* 396c1 (note 48 above). "Upward" (ἐκεῖ) means in the direction of the intelligible world.

[69] For instance Wallis (1995, 47–61), Pigler (2002, 20–23), Corrigan (2005, 23–26), Emilsson (2017, 37, 383), and the present study.

[70] Plotinus also calls the three principles "three natures" (ταῖς φύσεσι ταῖς τρισίν: V.1 [10] 8.27; φύσεις: II.9 [33] 1.20, III.5 [50] 1.45 and Wolters 1984, 27). Cf. Gerson (1994, 3–4), to whom I owe most of these references.

[71] Similarly Porphyry, in the titles of what he numbered as treatises V.1 [10] and V.3 [49], does not speak of hypostases without qualification, but of *primary* (ἀρχικῶν) and *knowing* (γνωριστικῶν) hypostases respectively (VP 4.41, 25.36, *Pinax* 5.2; VP 6.11, 25.40, *Pinax* 5.4). Plotinus did not himself give titles to his treatises, but Porphyry tells us that the titles which he reports in VP are the ones that came to prevail among those who owned copies of Plotinus' treatises (VP 4.14–19).

Secondly, in this passage, the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* are used synonymously both with "being" (τὸ εἶναι: III.5 [50] 2.39) and with each other.[74] The two terms are also combined in the expression ὑποστάσεις οὐσιώδεις at III.5 [50] 7.43.

Thirdly, as P. Hadot suggests, lines 38–39 of our passage, III.5 [50] 2.32 -39, contain an allusion to Aristotle's definition of the category of relation (πρός τι),[75] specifically from *Categories* 7.6a36–37 ("We call *relatives* all such things as are said to be just what they are, *of* or *than* other things, or in some way *in relation to* something else") and *Categories* 7.8a31–32 ("those things are relatives for which *being is the same as being somehow related to something*").[76] Hadot is the only translator or commentator I am aware of who quotes Aristotle as a background source for this passage. If he is correct about this and if the reference to Aristotle is not a mere coincidence, two different, though related points are at issue here: one is the identification of that on which *eros* depends as a relative; the other is how a relative can be an *ousia*.

The neuter dative, τούτῳ, at III.5 [50] 2.39 leaves little doubt that the relative on which *eros* depends for its existence is not the feminine Aphrodite-Soul, but the other Beautiful (ἄλλο καλὸν: III.5 [50] 2.38), which in this context is the noetic realm, Intellect.

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[72] Many different things are called *hypostasis* or are said to have *hypostasis* in the *Enneads*—e.g.: the One (VI.8 [39] 13.44, 15.28); Intellect (V.1 [10] 7.42); Soul (III.5 [50] 2.23, V.1 [10] 3.9, 15); *logos* (III.5 [50] 9.19–20); wisdom (I.4 [46] 9.19); knowledge (VI.1 [42] 6.13–15); numbers (VI.6 [34] 5.17); time (III.7 [45] 13.49, IV.4 [28] 15.3); relations (VI.1 [42] 7.26–28), among which *eros* (III.5 [50] 3.1; ὑποστατὸν at III.5 [50] 4.3); motion (VI.6 [34] 16.41); plants (V.2 [11] 1.25); matter (I.8 [51] 15.2; but see III.6 [26] 7.9–20); and so on. Sensible things are said to have apparent *hypostasis* (V.5 [32] 1.14–15: τὴν δοκοῦσαν ὑπόστασιν).

[73] Gerson (1994, 3) observes: "When Plotinus raises a question about the ὑπόστασις of X, he is generally not in doubt that X exists in some way, but he is intent on arguing that some opponent's account of that existence is false and that a better (i.e., Platonic) one is needed."

[74] See Wolters (1984, 81).

[75] P. Hadot (1990, 112 note 104, 178).

[76] Aristotle, *Categories* 7.6a36–37: Πρός τι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεται, ὅσα αὐτὰ ἅπερ ἐστὶν [37] ἑτέρων εἶναι λέγεται ἢ ὁπωσοῦν ἄλλως πρὸς ἕτερον. Aristotle, *Categories* 7.8a31–32: ἔστι τὰ πρός [32] τι οἷς τὸ εἶναι ταὐτόν ἐστι τῷ πρός τί πως ἔχειν. The translation is by J. L. Ackrill (in Barnes 1995).

As to the question of how a relative term could be an *ousia*, it should be observed that a *relatum* has its being in something other than itself, and to have one's being in something (τὸ εἶναι ἐν τούτῳ ἔχουσα: III.5 [50] 2.39) means to depend ontologically on it. In other words, insofar as a relative is a non-substantial category, it owes its being to the *ousia* of which it is, in traditional terms, an accident (συμβεβηκός). In the case of *eros*, this *ousia* is soul, in which *eros* would inhere as an accident. But to my knowledge, no accident is ever called *ousia* in Aristotle. The purpose of the allusion to Aristotle in this connection does not seem that of criticizing him, but simply to point at *eros'* dependence, for its being, on that of which it is a relative, the Beauty of Intellect. Patently (and negatively), then, to be an *ousia* does not automatically mean to have existence in an absolute sense, that is, to be *causa sui*, which in Plotinian metaphysics is a prerogative of the One, as we saw in the first chapter.

Finally (and more positively), the term *ousia* (and, in this context, *hypostasis*) means something which, while having a limited degree of ontological independence, only needs what is ontologically superior to it in order to exist qua *ousia*. More specifically, *eros* in its pure form owes its existence and the fact of being what it is to the following: directly, to that in which it inheres (i.e., soul) and to that of which it is love (i.e., the Beauty of Intellect or some of its images); indirectly, to that on which everything, including Soul and Intellect, depends for its existence (i.e., the One). And because the realities on which it depends are necessary and lasting realities, to say that *eros* is *ousia* and *hypostasis* means that it does not occur to the soul, from which it springs, as something external or accidental, but that it is engendered as the chief expression of the soul's nature, and that it is of the soul's essence to desire Beauty and the Good, to which *eros* is ultimately directed. In the basic meaning it has in III.5 [50], the tendency expressed by the term *eros* seems to coincide with βούλησις, a term which is generally translated with "will" and indicates a desire guided by reason and wholly and unequivocally directed toward the Good (cf. I.4 [46] 6.13–24, VI.8 [39] 3.2–4, 6.32–43, VI.9 [9] 6.39–40). As such, βούλησις is voluntary (ἑκούσιον: III.1 [3] 9.4–16, IV.3 [27] 13.18, 24.15, IV.8 [6] 5.3–4, VI.8 [39] 1.33–44, 3.17–21), in opposition to other desires, which are involuntary (ἀκούσιον: III.2 [47] 10.7, IV.3 [27] 24.15, IV.8 [6] 5.7–8, VI.8 [39] 4.15–17; ἀπροαίρετον: I.2 [19] 5.11–21; I.4 [46] 15.16–21) and directed to lesser or apparent goods.[77] To be soul, therefore, means to be essentially erotic in this precise sense, although not every individual soul succeeds in recollecting *eros'* true aim, and although some individual souls actually deviate from *eros'* natural direction.

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[77] See Gollwitzer (1900–1902, I, 9–10), Arnou (1967, 64), Gerson (1994, 151–155; 2018, 926). The use of the term βούλησις as rational desire directed to what is thought of as good is well attested both in Plato (e.g., *Gorgias* 468c2–7, 509e5–6, *Meno* 78b1–2) and in Aristotle (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* III.2.1111b26, 4.1113a15; *Rhetoric* I.10.1369a3–4).

Thus, Arnou's remark I quoted in the Introduction (cf. note 8 of the Introduction)—that in Plotinus such terms as ἔρως, ἔφεσις, πόθος, ὄρεξις, and ὁρμή cannot be taken as consistently signifying qualitatively different ways of desiring—is generally correct but needs to be partially qualified in light of Plotinus' use of the term *eros* in III.5 [50]; for what Arnou claims may be true of all the terms he mentions, with the exception of *eros* when this is properly understood as *ousia* and *hypostasis*. In fact, all the other terms indicate desire in its aspect of mere lack or poverty, which in the myth is represented by Penia.[78] By contrast, *eros* in the treatise dedicated to it is also an inventive or creative tendency (III.5 [50] 7.25, 27: ποριστικόν, a feature which Eros derives from his father, Poros) insofar as it is imbued hylomorphically with the *logos* of a superior principle.[79]

It is no accident, I conjecture, that Plotinus uses ἔρως, but none of the other desiderative terms, even to express the One's love of itself, as we saw in the previous chapter. This does not mean that the connatural *eros* of the soul, that *eros* which is *ousia* and *hypostasis*, is not characterized by lack and poverty; after all, all *eros*, with the exception of henologic *eros*, implies some form of lack in Plotinus' universe. It means rather that by being naturally imbued with this *eros*, the soul, although not already in possession of the object of its love, is naturally in a position to be able to reflect on that love and follow the fundamental direction which *eros*, in its purity, indicates: the Beauty which is Intellect, and the One beyond it. And it is because *eros* is present in the soul as *ousia* and *hypostasis*, rather than as some extrinsic occurrence, that the possibility of an ascent to the One is open to the soul as something belonging to its very nature. But I want to insist that in this context "naturally" means neither "immediately" nor "effortlessly," for as we shall see in the last chapter, the soul will have gradually to attune its innate love to its ultimate goal in order to be able to move forward in the ascent journey, which in turn may be understood as this very work of attunement.

In treatise III.5 [50] Plotinus gives us two illustrations of the *hypostatic*[80] or connatural character of *eros* in the soul: that of the eye (ὀφθαλμός) at 2.39–46 and continued at 3.6–19, and that of thoughts (νοήματα) at 7.46–58. Let us begin with the main passage where Eros is compared to an eye, III.5 [50] 2.39–46:[81]

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[78] The expression τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐπιθυμίας at III.5 [50] 9.50–51 is a notable exception, all the more surprising in light of Arnou's description of ἐπιθυμία as "le fait d'une âme enfoncée dans le corps" (Arnou 1964, 64). The exception is probably due to the fact that Plotinus is following Plato's use of the term in the text on which he is commenting (see Gerson 1994, 273 note 63).

[79] Cf. Lacrosse (1994, 130–131).

[80] Notice that this sense of the term "hypostatic" in reference to *eros* differs from the one I use in the last section of Chapter 5, where it denotes the kind of *eros* of a given hypostasis for its generator and ultimately for the One.

> [Eros is,] as it were, between the one desiring and the one desired; he is the eye of the desiring that through this eye provides the lover with the sight of the desired, while Eros himself runs ahead and, before it gives the lover the power of seeing through the organ, is himself filled with what is seen: seeing earlier than the lover, to be sure, yet not in the same way by fixing in the lover that which is seen, but by plucking the fruit of the sight of beauty as he runs by it.

Terminology related to vision pervades the stretch of text of III.5 [50] that runs from 2.40 through 3.19,[82] and by the time Plotinus was writing, the metaphor of the eye of the soul was something of a common place in the history of philosophy, at least within the tradition of Platonism.[83] Plotinus reinterprets this metaphor in an original way. The main correspondences produced by the metaphor are three: the Soul as lover, *eros* as the eye of the lover, and the Beauty of Intellect (or Intellect as Beauty) as the beloved. What Plotinus *seems* to be saying is that *eros* allows the Soul to see the Beauty of Intellect. This is not the case, however, for it is not *eros* that produces the Soul's vision of Beauty, but quite the contrary: it is the Soul's vision of Beauty that produces *eros* as a *hypostasis* and an *ousia*. Thus, Plotinus writes at III.5 [50] 3.6–10:[84]

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[81] III.5 [50] 2.39–46: …μεταξὺ ὥσπερ ποθοῦντος [40] καὶ ποθουμένου, ὀφθαλμὸς ὁ τοῦ ποθοῦντος παρέχων μὲν [41] τῷ ἐρῶντι δι᾽ αὐτοῦ τὸ ὁρᾶν τὸ ποθούμενον, προτρέχων δὲ [42] αὐτὸς καὶ πρὶν ἐκείνῳ παρασχεῖν τὴν τοῦ ὁρᾶν δι᾽ ὀργάνου [43] δύναμιν αὐτὸς πιμπλάμενος τοῦ θεάματος, πρότερος μέν, [44] οὐ μὴν ὁμοίως ὁρῶν τῷ ἐνστηρίζειν μὲν ἐκείνῳ τὸ ὅραμα, [45] αὐτὸν δὲ καρποῦσθαι τὴν θέαν τοῦ καλοῦ αὐτὸν παρα- [46] θέουσαν.

[82] Here is a list of the terms of vision used in III.5 [50] 2.40–3.19: ὀφθαλμός, ὄμμα (eye); ὅρασις (seeing, the act of sight: on the side of the subject); ὁρᾶν, ὅραμα (that which is seen, vision: on the side of the object); θέαμα, ὁρώμενον, θέαν (seeing, view, sight, spectacle: it can be both on the side of the subject and on that of the object); εἴδωλον (image, likeness), to which ἄγαλμα (III.5 [50] 9.12) and εἰκών (III.5 [50] 9.33) are closely related (see my observations on ἴχνος at the end of Chapter 1). Cf. Wolters (1984, 98–99) and P. Hadot (1990, 268–277, under the relevant entries in the index of Greek terms). References to Plato may include: *Theaetetus* 156d3–e7, *Phaedrus* 251a7–b2, *Meno* 76d2–5, *Timaeus* 45b2–46a2 and 67c8–d1.

[83] See Plato, *Sophist* 254a10, *Republic* VII.518c4–d1, 527d6–e3, and most notably 533d2 (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμμα); Aristotle, *Topics* I.17.108a11 ("as sight is in the eye, so is intellect in soul" [οἷον ὡς ὄψις ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ, νοῦς ἐν ψυχῇ]), *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.12.1144a30 (φρόνησις as the eye of the soul). For loose parallels in the *Enneads*, cf. I.6 [1] 9.30–32, II.4 [12] 10.13–17, IV.4 [28] 24.28–33, V.1 [10] 1.31–34, VI.8 [39] 19.10 (ὀμμάτων τῆς ψυχῆς). Cf. Apuleius, *De Platone* 88.4 (I.193); *Corpus Hermeticum* X.5, XIII.3.

> And this [viz., Intellect] was its [viz., the Soul's] first vision, and it looked at it as toward its good, and rejoiced in its seeing, and the vision was of such a kind that the one seeing could not make its sight an incidental activity, but so that by a sort of delight and a tension toward it and an intensity of the sight, it [viz., the Soul] generated from itself something worthy of itself and of its vision [viz., Eros].

This passage emphasizes that *eros* as an eye is not that which made the first vision possible, but the essential result of that vision which indicates the Soul's fundamental connection to Intellect, or the effect of the Soul's amazement in the face of Beauty, which here stands for the realm of Intellect. This radical experience brings about a *hypostasis* and an *ousia*: *eros* as the indelible mark of Intellect on Soul, or *eros* as the truly real reminder of an unforgettable vision. This vision, to be sure, is itself derived from a still higher vision, to wit, the contemplation of the One by Intellect. As we saw in Chapter 2, psychic *eros*, or the love engendered by the Soul's contemplation of Intellect, is only one type of *eros* found among higher realities, the other two being noetic *eros*, or Intellect's love for the One, and henologic *eros*, or the One's self-love, making of the One the end and origin of all *eros*.

If we were to interpret this experience chronologically, *eros* would not be something naturally present in the soul, but some later extrinsic superimposition. However, one need not endorse such an interpretation, for the priority voiced by the word "first" (πρῶτον: III.5 [50] 3.6) is logical rather than strictly chronological, as confirmed by the passage on myths I quoted earlier from the last chapter of the same treatise on *eros* (III.5 [50] 9.24–29). Thus, the vision of Beauty can rightly be interpreted as the innate openness of the individual soul to contemplate the noetic realm, a possibility which, if taken seriously, will engender an essential love for this great Beauty: *eros*. We should also notice that Plotinus here is talking about *eros* in its pure form. As we saw in the first chapter of treatise III.5 [50], *eros* can also deviate from its course. When this happens,

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[84] III.5 [50] 3.6–10: Καὶ πρῶτον ἦν ὅραμα αὐτῇ τοῦτο καὶ ἑώρα ὡς πρὸς [7] ἀγαθὸν αὐτῆς καὶ ἔχαιρεν ὁρῶσα, καὶ τὸ ὅραμα τοιοῦτον [8] ἦν, ὡς μὴ πάρεργον ποιεῖσθαι τὴν θέαν τὸ ὁρῶν, ὡς τῇ [9] οἷον ἡδονῇ καὶ τάσει τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸ καὶ σφοδρότητι τῆς [10] θέας γεννῆσαί τι παρ᾽ αὐτῆς ἄξιον αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ὁράματος.

eros occurs to the soul as something extrinsic, or accidental. This means that *eros* may become deviant, but at its origin and in its essence it is pure.

Plotinus continues at III.5 [50] 3.11–13:[85] "Therefore, from that which is intensly active about what is seen, and from that which outflows,[86] as it were, from what is seen, Eros came into being [as] a filled eye,[87] like a sight along with the image [of the thing seen][88]…" Wolters rightly points out that in this passage we find the two "constituents" of Eros that correspond to his parents in the *Symposium* myth: Penia and Poros.[89] The former corresponds to the soul's indeterminacy as the receiving pole of vision (line 11: τοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος), while the latter (together with nectar and the garden of Zeus) corresponds to the images (line 13: εἰδώλου) or *logoi* flowing from Intellect as the determining pole of vision.

As I anticipated, Plotinus further clarifies the substantiality of *eros* through a comparison of *eros* and thoughts (νοήματα), at III.5 [50] 7.46–58:[90]

> For in general it is likely that the true goods are *ousia*, as long as the soul acts according to nature within limits,[91] while the others [viz., things that are not true goods] do not have their activity from soul, but are nothing

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[85] III.5 [50] 3.11–13: Ἐξ οὖν τοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος συντόνως περὶ τὸ ὁρώμενον [12] καὶ ἐκ τοῦ οἷον ἀπορρέοντος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὁρωμένου [13] ὄμμα πληρωθέν, οἷον μετ' εἰδώλου ὅρασις, Ἔρως ἐγένετο… The lines that follow this passage, 14–19, propose an etymology of Ἔρως as deriving from ὅρασις on the basis of Plato's *Cratylus* 420a9–b4, whose text reads: "And *eros*, since it flows in [εἰσρεῖ] from the outside and this flow [ῥοὴ] does not belong to the one who has it but is introduced from outside through the eyes, for these reasons in ancient times [*eros*] was called *esros* [ἔσρος: "in-flux"] from the flowing in [ἐσρεῖν]—for we used to use a short 'o' [οὖ] instead of a long 'o' [ὦ]—while now it is called *eros* [ἔρως] through the change of the short 'o' into a long 'o' " (my translation).

[86] Notice the assonances and associations with Poros: ἀπορρέοντος (III.5 [50] 3.12), ποριστικὸν (III.5 [50] 7.25), εἰσρυεὶς (III.5 [50] 9.8), ῥυέντες (III.5 [50] 9.14), ῥυέντος (III.5 [50] 9.35).

[87] The expression ὄμμα πληρωθέν at III.5 [50] 3.13 evokes πιμπλάμενος τοῦ θεάματος at III.5 [50] 2.43. Cf. also III.8 [30] 11.6, V.8 [31] 10.14, VI.4 [22] 12.6.

[88] Cf. III.5 [50] 2.42–43: τὴν τοῦ ὁρᾶν δι' ὀργάνου δύναμιν.

[89] Wolters (1984, 97).

[90] III.5 [50] 7.46–58: Καὶ γὰρ ὅλως κινδυνεύει τὰ μὲν ἀγαθὰ τὰ ἀληθῆ [47] κατὰ φύσιν ψυχῆς ἐνεργούσης ἐν ὡρισμένοις οὐσία εἶναι, [48] τὰ δ' ἄλλα οὐκ ἐξ αὐτῆς ἐνεργεῖν, οὐδὲν δ' ἄλλο ἢ πάθη [49] εἶναι· ὥσπερ ψευδῆ νοήματα οὐκ ἔχοντα τὰς ὑπ' αὐτὰ [50] οὐσίας, καθάπερ τὰ ἀληθῆ ὄντως καὶ ἀίδια καὶ ὡρισμένα [51] ὁμοῦ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τὸ νοητὸν καὶ τὸ εἶναι ἔχοντα οὐ μόνον [52] ἐν τῷ ἁπλῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῳ περὶ τὸ νοητὸν ὄντως [53] [καὶ νοῦν τὸν ἐν ἑκάστῳ], εἰ δεῖ καὶ <νοῦν τὸν> ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν τίθεσθαι [54] καθαρῶς νόησιν καὶ νοητόν, καὶ μὴ ὁμοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν τοῦτο [55] καὶ ἁπλῶς. ὅθεν καὶ τῶν ἁπλῶν ἡμῖν ὁ ἔρως· καὶ γὰρ αἱ [56] νοήσεις· καὶ εἴ τινος τῶν ἐν μέρει, κατὰ συμβεβηκός, [57] ὥσπερ, εἰ τόδε τὸ τρίγωνον, δύο ὀρθὰς θεωρεῖ, καθόσον [58] ἁπλῶς τρίγωνον.

[91] Cf. III.5 [50] 1.21, 7.50.

> other than affections;[92] they are like false thoughts which have no *ousia* under them the way the really true, eternal, and definite thoughts possess in a unity the act of thinking, what is thought, and being,[93] not only in what is Intellect simply, but also in each particular intellect when it is directed to a true intelligible, if [it is true that] also the intellect in each of us[94] must be regarded, in its pure state,[95] as a unity of the act of thinking and what is thought, although we are not in this pure state in unity[96] and simply. Hence[97] also our *eros* is directed to things that are simple; for our acts of thought are also from there. Even if our acts of thoughts are directed to something particular, this is accidental, just like when one observes that this triangle here equals two right angles, it is so insofar as it is a triangle simply.[98]

This passage is meant to be part of the answer to the fifth of a series of six questions asked at III.5 [50] 6.7–28, namely: "Why are not all *daimons erotes*?" (line 27).[99] Plotinus' main response to this question, outlined at III.5 [50] 6.28–35, is that Eros springs from the pure Soul's desire for the Good and the Beautiful

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[92] Cf. III.5 [50] 7.42.

[93] An echo of Parmenides' dictum about the identity of thought and being (DK 28.B3; cf. Chapter 2 note 78).

[94] III.5 [50] 7.53 presents a textual problem. Three solutions have been proposed. (1) HS$_1$: καὶ νοῦν τὸν ἐν ἑκάστῳ εἴδει. Καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν; (2) HS$_2$: καὶ νοῦν τὸν ἐν ἑκάστῳ, εἰ δεῖ καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν; (3) Igal (1982–1998), followed by HS$_2$ in their *Addenda*, and by P. Hadot (1990): [καὶ νοῦν τὸν ἐν ἑκάστῳ], εἰ δεῖ καὶ <νοῦν τὸν> ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν. In my translation I follow (3).

[95] Cf. IV.4 [28] 2.24, V.3 [49] 3.21, 28.

[96] Cf. V.3 [49] 3.20–45, VI.5 [23] 7.

[97] Another textual problem is found at III.5 [50] 7.54–55, again with three solutions offered: (1) HS$_2$: νοητόν—καὶ μὴ ὁμοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν τοῦτο καὶ ἁπλῶς—ὅθεν; (2) *Addenda* to HS$_2$: νοητόν καὶ μὴ ὁμοῦ· καὶ ἡμῶν τοῦτο καὶ ἁπλῶς· ὅθεν; (3) Igal (1982–1998, II, 137 note 84), P. Hadot (1990): νοητόν, καὶ μὴ ὁμοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν τοῦτο καὶ ἁπλῶς. ὅθεν. In my translation I follow (3).

[98] Cf. Plato, *Republic* VI.510d5–511a1; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.30.1025a32, VII.10.1035b1–3.

[99] The remaining five questions (and answers) found at III.5 [50] 6.7–28 are: (1) How do *daimons* differ from gods? Answer: Gods are free of affections (ἀπαθὲς: 6.10), *daimons* are not (6.7–13); (2) Why did *daimons* not stay impassive? Unanswered (6.13–14); (3) Are there *daimons* in the intelligible realm, and are there gods in the sensible cosmos? Answer: There are no *daimons* in the intelligible, and the gods that we see in the sensible (i.e., the heavenly bodies down to the moon) are secondary gods (6.14–24); (4) What are *daimons* in the sensible cosmos? Answer: They are traces left by the Soul in the cosmos (6.24–27); (6) In what sense are *daimons* not free of matter? (6.28). Answer: They participate not in sensible but in intelligible matter (6.35–7.25); on the intelligible matter found in III.5 [50], cf. note 56 above.

(line 29: ψυχῆς ἐφιεμένης τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ καλοῦ), while other *daimons* spring from the inferior part of the World-Soul (and of individual rational souls) for the sake of the administration of the sensible cosmos.

What justifies the fact that Eros and other *daimons* are both called *daimons* (although Eros in its pure condition is called a god) is the fact that both essentially share in the double aspect of indigence and resourcefulness; or, in mythical language: their parents are Poros and Penia (see III.5 [50] 6.1–6, 7.26–30). What distinguish them are their different aims. Here Plotinus implicitly recalls the distinction between pure, mixed, and deviant *eros* introduced in the first chapter of the treatise. Just like there the discriminating factor was the primary aim of any given soul, so here it is the particular *daimon* with which each individual soul identifies itself.[100] What is central to these identifications is the fact that, no matter what *daimon* an individual soul happens to identify with, this soul still retains the *eros* with which it is naturally endowed. However, to the extent that the soul identifies with an inferior *daimon* and leaves its *eros* inactive (ἀργὸν: III.5 [50] 7.34), it is itself inferior to those souls which actively identify with their *eros* by primarily engaging in the pursuit, not of particular goods, but of the Good true and simple (τοῦ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὄντως: III.5 [50] 7.31).[101] Yet, as Plotinus emphatically points out, even these inferior *daimons* are called *ousia* (see III.5 [50] 7.39–42; cf. III.5 [50] 4.4–7 on individual souls) insofar as they are "according to nature" (κατὰ φύσιν) and as such noble (καλοί: III.5 [50] 7.40). The only desires that are explicitly called evil (κακαῖς […] ἐπιθυμίαις: III.5 [50] 7.37) and in no way *ousia* or real *hypostases* (οὐδαμῇ οὐσία οὐδὲ ὑποστάσεις οὐσιώδεις: III.5 [50] 7.43) are those which have deviated altogether from the *eros* connatural to the soul. These deviant desires are what Plotinus takes to be truly "pathological" for the soul, in the sense that they do not belong to it originally or essentially, but are the result of the soul's vicious attitudes and dispositions (ἐν διαθέσεσι καὶ ἕξεσιν: III.5 [50] 7.45).[102]

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[100] Historically, the personification, or rather *daimonification* (and deification), of the desiderative forces present in the soul in its various manifestations had the advantage of giving a plausible philosophical interpretation to gods and *daimons* as central figures in the religious sensibility of the Hellenistic world (see Kittel and Friedrich 1964–1976, II, 1–10, s.v. δαίμων). People were thus identified with their *daimons*, or the primary desire which, qua souls, they had embraced (see III.5 [50] 7.30–39; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 252c3–253c6). For a treatment of the notion of *diaimon* in Plato and the Platonic tradition, see Timotin (2012, with remarks on Plotinus at pages 286–300; 2018, 191–195 for the Plotinian approach, followed by an interpretation of Proclus' critique of Plotinus' demonology at pages 195–205).

[101] Plotinus does refer both to Eros and to these other *daimons* with the collective appellative of *erotes* (III.5 [50] 7.40). However, he maintains the difference between the two on the basis of their primary aim.

Now, Plotinus compares the pathological status of deviant desires to false thoughts, and the substantial status of pure (and, to a lesser extent, mixed) *eros* to true thoughts. To say that true thoughts have the status of *ousia* means that qua thoughts they coincide with what they think. Put differently, in true thinking (i.e., in the noetic thinking which is proper to Intellect), thinking subject and object of thought are identical. This doctrine occurs often in the *Enneads* and has its more explicit avatars in Aristotle (*Metaphysics* XII.9.1074b34–35) and Parmenides (DK 28.B3; cf. Chapter 2 note 78). Knowledge, or the act of knowing, is to be understood as a relative term whose substantiality depends on the substantiality of what is known (and vice versa),[103] much like the substantiality of *eros* depends on the substantiality of its beloved. However, there is a major difference between true thoughts and pure *eros*, namely: the former take place exclusively at the noetic level, whereas in the context of treatise III.5 [50] the latter occurs at the level of soul. Thus, as P. Hadot[104] points out, the identity of thought and being, which in Intellect is continuous, can be achieved by particular intellects only occasionally. Within this framework, *eros* qua *ousia* signifies precisely this tendency of each particular intellect toward that which such an intellect can be only partially and discontinuously (see III.5 [50] 7.54–55). Hadot writes:[105]

> L'Amour est justement le désir de ce dont on est privé, donc le désir de cette unité, de cette coïncidence avec ce qui est universellement et absolument (*7, 55*). S'il est substantiel, ce sera seulement dans la mesure où il se rapporte à ce qui est absolument (cf. 2, 39; 7, 30–32) : il sera ainsi *relation subsistante*.

Even when the thoughts of a particular intellect are directed toward sensible particulars (e.g., the particular triangle, or this triangle here, τόδε τὸ τρίγωνον, mentioned at III.5 [50] 7.57), they can nonetheless be true to the extent that they grasp these particulars in light of what is absolute (e.g., the absolute triangle, or triangle simply, ἁπλῶς τρίγωνον, at III.5 [50] 7.58), which exists in Intellect, con-substantial with the thought that thinks it. Analogously, even when the *eros* of a particular soul, whether pure or mixed, is directed toward particular beautiful things of various kinds, it has the power to grasp these particular beauties in light of that Beauty (and, ultimately, that Good), which is absolute and constitutes the actual aim of all longing. By exercising this power repeatedly and, as it were, making it its task to do so, the soul does not merely come to understand the origin of the particular beauties it experiences, but, more importantly, it gradually refines its *eros* and transforms itself by being directed more and more steadily toward the One as both its true aim and the universal Good.

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[102] Parallels on the difference between *pathos* and *ousia* in the *Enneads* include II.6 [17] 1.48–49, III.6 [26] 1.25–32, IV.7 [2] 8^5.43–46, VI.1 [42] 3.7–8, VI.3 [44] 4.12–15.

[103] On knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) as *hypostasis* relative to the known (ἐπιστητόν), see VI.1 [42] 6.13–15, where the same claim is made also about sense-perception (αἴσθησις) in relation to what is perceived (αἰσθητόν).

[104] P. Hadot (1990, 234–235).

[105] P. Hadot (1990, 235, my emphasis).

CHAPTER 4

The One as the Supremely Loved, or the Universal Final Cause

Each thing derived from the One is conceived by recourse to the specific character of its qualified unity, which separates it from the unqualified unity of the Principle; at the same time its nature is best grasped through the particular love which characterizes the level it occupies in Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy. This love, as I argued in Chapter 2, is the gift of the One which points back to the One itself. And as we saw in Chapter 3, for the soul such a gift is not a later and extrinsic addition but is found to belong essentially to it. However, this does not mean that the soul, simply by possessing love in this way, possesses at the same time the object or final target of this love. What it means is rather that in virtue of the inborn character of its love, every soul is given the possibility of a journey toward the aim of that same love, its true beloved. In other words, love, coming from the One and naturally disposing the soul toward the One, if approached correctly, already indicates a path toward its ultimate destination. If what derives from the One were not naturally endowed with love for that same One, we would probably be right to think of the process of derivation as the undesirable result of some momentous wreckage, the drifting of flotsam and jetsam from a universal shipwreck. But because love is an essential trait of all derived reality, that which from an "*archeo*logical" perspective is the derivation of all things from one single source, from a "*teleo*logical" perspective is viewed as the possibility of return to that very same source, conceived by Plotinus as the Good: the ultimate terminus of all desire, or the universal final cause.

Thus, as I briefly observed in the first chapter, the One is endowed with a double causality, or, perhaps less imprecisely, it possesses one single causality which from the perspective of the inquirer displays two conceptually distinct aspects: efficient and final.[1] Part 1 of this study focused mainly on the former aspect: there the One was understood as an infinite power (δύναμις) which, erotic in nature, generates the whole of reality and maintains it in existence. In Part 2 the One is approached from the opposite end of the spectrum, that

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[1] For a concise treatment of the One as both efficient and final cause see Bussanich (1999, 45–57).

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is, from the perspective of the ascending individual soul as the carrier of the connatural *eros* received from the One and aiming at the One, which is thus conceptualized as final cause, the highest and universal aim of desire, *summum desideratum* of all derived reality: the End or the Good.

My goal in this chapter is to sketch some of Plotinus' basic presuppositions about the One conceived of as the Good, or the final goal of the soul's ascent. Developing a point I introduced in the previous chapter, I will argue that for Plotinus all desire is essentially directed to goodness, and goodness is naturally an object of desire for no other reason than its being good. The One, being the Good, is the universal object or aim of desire: it is the universal final cause, the last desideratum which aims at nothing beyond itself and which from the perspective of the desirer is conceptually distinct but actually identical with the One qua Principle. It is this identity of Principle and End that explains why love is naturally directed toward the One, for the supreme goal of all love is at the same time the giver of all love—once again, in terms of causality: the universal final cause is conceptually distinct but actually identical with the universal efficient cause.

1 Desire and Its Relation to Goodness

Plotinus explicitly refers to the One or the Good as end (τέλος) in several passages of the *Enneads* (e.g., i.4 [46] 6.10–11, v.5 [32] 12.19–20, vi.2 [43] 11.37–39, vi.9 [9] 9.20–22; cf. also iii.9 [13] 2.4, v.3 [49] 17.34). More precisely, the One, insofar as it is the Good, is not only conceived of as just any end, but as the universal end. Thus, at v.5 [32] 12.7–9 Plotinus writes: "For *all* things reach out to that [viz., the Good] and long for it by necessity of nature, as if divining by instinct that they cannot exist without it"[2] (my emphasis). In an earlier treatise, he writes that "*all* things desire the good" (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ πάντα ὀρέγεσθαι: VI.5 [23] 1.11–12; my emphasis) and claims that this statement is recognized as true on the basis of what he calls the "firmest principle of all" (πάντων βεβαιοτάτη ἀρχή: VI.5 [23] 1.9), namely, that each thing desires to be one and identical (ἓν καὶ ταὐτόν: cf. VI.5 [23] 1.1, 7). For this reason, the desire for the Good seems to coincide with, or be a specification of, the desire for unity.[3] Accordingly, in the language of love, the One is referred to as that which is most loved or desired: ἐρασμιώτατον (VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 250e1, *Republic* III.402d6, *Timaeus* 87d8) or ἀγαπητότατον (VI.8 [39] 16.15); at VI.7 [38] 32.35 also ποθεινότατον). Here is the first of the two passages in which the superlative ἐρασμιώτατον occurs in the *Enneads*, VI.7 [38] 32.24–29 (my emphasis):[4]

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[2] v.5 [32] 12.7–9: Πάντα γὰρ ὀρέγεται ἐκείνου καὶ ἐφίεται αὐτοῦ [8] φύσεως ἀνάγκῃ, ὥσπερ ἀπομεμαντευμένα, ὡς ἄνευ αὐτοῦ [9] οὐ δύναται εἶναι. Plotinus often emphasizes the status of the One as universal desideratum in the *Enneads*. The following passages, though far from exhaustive, are also worth noting (in parentheses I indicate the terms of desire or goal-directed motion employed in each reference): i.6 [1] 7.1 (ὀρέγεται), i.7 [54] 1.22–24 (line 22: ἐφίεται; line 23: ἐπιστρέφειν), i.8 [51] 2.2–4 (line 3: ἐφίεται; line 4: δεόμενα), iii.2 [47] 3.31–33 (line 32: ἐφίεται), v.5 [32] 12.11 (ἔφεσιν σύμφυτον), v.6 [24] 5.18–19 (ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια ἁπάντων πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν), vi.2 [43] 11.27–32 (line 28: σπουδὴν), vi.5 [23] 1.8–20 (line 12: ὀρέγεσθαι; line 13: σπεύδοι; line 18: σπεύδει; lines 14 and 16: ὄρεξις), 10.1–10 (line 3: πόθῳ, Ἔρως; line 4: ἐφιέμενος, ἀγαπῶν; line 5, 7: ἐραστὴς, ἐρασταὶ; lines 8, 9: ἐρῶντες, ἐρώμενον), 12.31–36 (line 33: ἐπιστρέφονται), vi.7 [38] 19.1–5 (lines 1 and 5: ἐφέσει; line 2: ἐφετὸν; line 3: ἐφίεται), 20.16–18 (line 16: ἐφίεται), 42.8–14 (line 12: ὀρέγεται); cf. also vi.7 [38] 26.6–7 (line 6: ἔφεσις, ὠδὶς), 31.17–18 (line17: ἐρᾷ; line18: ἐρᾶν), vi.8 [39] 7.3–8 (line 4: ἐφετὸν; line 8: θέλει), 13.12–13 (line 12: ἐφιέμενον, βούλεται).

> Truly, when you cannot grasp the form or shape of what is longed for, it would be *most longed for* and *most loved*, and love for it would be *immeasurable*. For love is *not limited* here, because neither is the beloved, but the love of this would be *unbounded*; so his Beauty is of another kind and Beauty beyond Beauty.

For our purposes, two points deserve particular attention in this passage. The first concerns the nature of the One insofar as it is supremely loved. The broader context of the passage I just cited is chapters 31–36 of treatise VI.7 [38] *How the multitude of the Forms came into being and on the Good*. Part of Plotinus' goal in these chapters is to try to show that the One is the End that attracts all reality, and more particularly the individual soul, to itself. More specifically, he is telling us that while any other thing can, under certain circumstances, be a good, only the One can be the Good. Throughout the *Enneads*, and especially in what in Porphyry's order are the last three treatises of the sixth *Ennead*, the One is explicitly called "the Good" (τὸ ἀγαθόν or, in the contracted form, τἀγαθόν) so frequently that a complete list of references would result almost superfluous to establish such a universally recognized connection in Plotinus.[5] The second point deserving attention in this passage concerns the love by which the One is to be approached. Plotinus wants to show that in order to grow near to the One qua supreme object of love, the soul is required to assume a certain disposition, or ought to attune itself to the desired end. And since the desired end is the One understood as infinite erotic power, the soul, in short, must not only be a loving soul, but its love for the most lovable ought to be love of an infinite kind. I will briefly consider the first point (i.e., the universal final causality of the One) in this and the next section; the second point (i.e., the necessity of attunement) is one of what I will refer to as the two preconditions of the soul's ascent to the One, with which I will deal in the first section of the next chapter.

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[3] Cf. Emilsson and Strange (2015, 215–216), Gerson (2018, 760 note 2). The phrase πάντων βεβαιοτάτη ἀρχή at VI.5 [23] 1.9 is an echo of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.3.1005b8–12, 17–18, and 4.1006a4–5, where similar expressions are used to refer to the principle of non-contradiction.

[4] VI.7 [38] 32.24–29: Καὶ μήν, ὅτου ἂν ποθεινοῦ ὄντος μήτε [25] σχῆμα μήτε μορφὴν ἔχοις λαβεῖν, ποθεινότατον καὶ ἐρασμιώτατον [26] ἂν εἴη, καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἂν ἄμετρος εἴη. Οὐ γὰρ [27] ὥρισται ἐνταῦθα ὁ ἔρως, ὅτι μηδὲ τὸ ἐρώμενον, ἀλλ' [28] ἄπειρος ἂν εἴη ὁ τούτου ἔρως, ὥστε καὶ τὸ κάλλος αὐτοῦ [29] ἄλλον τρόπον καὶ κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος. ARMSTRONG'S translation, minimally modified.

[5] Sleeman and Pollet provide over five columns of references for τὸ ἀγαθόν in the sense of the Good (Sleeman and Pollet 1980, s.v. ἀγαθός, d), though also alerting us to the fact that the

In what sense, then, is the One the only true universal desideratum? Why is the One not only the Simple, that is, the Source which according to the Principle of Prior Simplicity must be inferred from the inability of every multiplicity to account for its relative unity, but also at the same time the Good, that is, not *any* good, but *the* universal and truly final goal of all desire? Or rather, granting that goodness conceived of in this sense can be predicated of the One only from the perspective of the desirer (cf. VI.7 [38] 24.13–16),[6] why should it be predicated *exclusively* of the One? In what sense is any good other than the Good simply inadequate to serve as the ultimate goal of all striving? And why should the final cause coincide with the efficient cause, the τέλος of all things with the ἀρχή of all things?

The problem is vast and would require more attention than I could presently dedicate to it. Accordingly, I will limit my answer to a summary clarification of four points endorsed by Plotinus. All of them were established doctrine, if to different degrees, in the broad Platonic tradition (including Aristotle) of which he is both a heir and a major representative. These points are: (i) that whatever is called good is generally understood to be an object of desire, and that desire, in turn, can only aim at something good; (ii) that whatever is good—and *a fortiori* the Good—is not good because it is desired, but is desired because it is good; (iii) that if there is an unqualified good at all (i.e., the Good), it cannot be desired for the sake of some other good, but only for itself; and (iv) that the Good cannot be identified with anything which desires some (other) good, for being itself the Good, in it there is no desire for any (further) good. I will consider the first two claims in the rest of this section, and reserve the next section to a treatment of the remaining two claims.

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term is "generally, but not always equivalent to τὸ ἕν, τὸ πρῶτον, τὸ ἐπέκεινα, ἡ ἀρχή" (Sleeman and Pollet 1980, 3.53–55).

[6] This is also true of efficient causality, which strictly is predicated of the One only from the perspective of the effect.

The first claim—(i) that whatever is taken to be good is at the same time an object of desire, and that desire aims only at something good—is solidly grounded in Platonic and Aristotelian soil. Thus, leaving aside the hermeneutic question about Plato's real views in the dialogues, he may be thought of as endorsing the notion that desire aims essentially at some good when, in *Symposium* 205e2–3, he has Socrates affirm, in reply to Aristophanes (189c2–193e2), that "love [τὸν ἔρωτα] is neither of its other half nor of the whole, unless, my friend, this to some degree happened to be good [ἀγαθὸν]" (my translation; see further *Symposium* 201a2–c9, especially c4–5, and 205d1–206a13).[7] Regarding Aristotle, the *locus classicus* of his understanding of goodness as the proper object, not only of desire, but of all goal-directed activity, is the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I.1.1094a1–3, my emphasis): "Every craft and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, seems to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be *that at which all things aims*."[8] As for Plotinus, when, echoing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1.1094a3, he writes that the Good is "that 'to which everything aspires' " (τὸ οὗ πάντα ἐφίεται: I.7 [54] 1.22), obviously he is already thinking, not of *any* good, but of the Good. The same passage from Aristotle is evoked also at I.8 [51] 2.3 and VI.7 [38] 20.18 (cf. further I.3 [20] 1.1–2, VI.8 [39] 7.3–4).

To be sure, I was unable to find a passage in which Plotinus formally states the first claim in its entirety. He clearly suscribes to its first part, as we just saw in the previous paragraph, while its second part—that desire aims only at something good—may be inferred from lines 8–9 of VI.7 [38] 24.4–9[9] (cf. also I.6 [1] 7.3–4):

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[7] Other passages in Plato supporting my first claim may include: *Meno* 77b2–78b6, particularly 77c1–2 (τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμεῖν) and 78b3–4 (βούλεσθαί τε τἀγαθὰ); *Gorgias* 468a5–c8 and 499e6–500a2, especially 468b1 (Τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἄρα διώκοντες), 468b7 (Ἕνεκ' ἄρα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ), 468c5 (τὰ γὰρ ἀγαθὰ βουλόμεθα), 499e6 (Ἕνεκα γάρ που τῶν ἀγαθῶν), 499e9 (ἐκείνου [i.e., τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ] ἕνεκα); *Republic* VI.505d8 (τὰ ὄντα [ἀγαθὰ] ζητοῦσιν) and 505d11 (τούτου [i.e., τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ] ἕνεκα); cf. also *Charmides* 167e4–5. Less explicit passages in Plato include *Philebus* 20d7–10, 22b6–8.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1.1094a1–3: "Πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ πᾶσα μέθοδος, ὁμοίως δὲ πρᾶξίς τε καὶ [2] προαίρεσις, ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ἐφίεται δοκεῖ. διὸ καλῶς ἀπεφή- [3] ναντο τἀγαθόν, οὗ πάντ' ἐφίεται. The translation is by W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson (in Barnes 1995). Cf. also the following references in Aristotle (with the desiderative terms he uses provided in parentheses): *Topics* III.1.116a19–20 (ἐφίεται), *Physics* II.3.195a23–26 (τέλος, ἐθέλει), *De anima* III.10.433a27–29 (ἀεὶ κινεῖ μὲν τὸ ὀρεκτόν…), *Nicomachean Ethics* I.2.1094a18–22 (βουλόμεθα, αἱρούμεθα, ὄρεξιν), III.4.1113a15–16 (βούλησις), X.2.1172b9–15 (ἐφιέμενα, ἐφίεται), 1172b35–1173a5 (ἐφίεται), and *Rhetoric* I.6.1362a21–24 (ἐφίεται).

[9] VI.7 [38] 24.4–9: Ἆρά γε τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὅτι ἐστὶν [5] ἄλλῳ ἐφετόν, ἔστι καὶ λέγεται ἀγαθόν, καί τινι μὲν ὂν [6] ἐφετόν τινι ἀγαθόν, πᾶσι δὲ ὂν τοῦτο λέγομεν εἶναι τὸ [7] ἀγαθόν; Ἢ μαρτύριον μὲν ἄν τις τοῦτο ποιήσαιτο τοῦ [8] εἶναι ἀγαθόν, δεῖ δέ γε φύσιν αὐτὸ τὸ ἐφετὸν ἔχειν [9] τοιαύτην, ὡς δικαίως ἂν τυχεῖν τῆς τοιαύτης προσηγορίας.

> Is the Good good, and does it have that name, because it is desirable for another, and is it good for one because it is desirable for one, but because it is this for all we say that it is the Good? Now one might offer this as evidence that the Good exists, but surely the object of desire itself must have such a nature that it is right to call it this.

Moreover, the entirety of the first claim—again, that whatever is taken to be good is at the same time an object of desire, and that desire aims only at something good—can be safely deduced from the concomitance of two statements endorsed by Plotinus, namely, that each of the Forms is good by reason of the Good (VI.7 [38] 22.6; cf. also 22.33–34), and that the Good is naturally and eminently desirable (VI.8 [39] 7.3–4). From this, one may conclude that whatever participates in form—and in Plotinus' universe this means everything with the possible exception of pre-cosmic matter (cf. Chapter 2 note 183)—must be desired by reason of the Good. Thus, nothing is desired which is not somehow "colored by the Good" (ἐπιχρώσαντος αὐτὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ: VI.7 [38] 22.6). To put it somewhat differently, it is a matter of understanding what is good as the proper intentional object of desire and, vice versa, desire as an intention essentially aiming at some good. This idea may become clearer if one considers the patent absurdity of a desire directed at an object in which nothing good can be detected. In the final analysis, those who desire things considered evil in one way or another obviously desire them for the sake of *some* (at least *prima facie*) good that is associated with them, or for *some aspect* in them which is considered good, if not unconditionally, at least under certain circumstances. (This desire may include the hope or the inkling that some good may be found, upon closer scrutiny, even in something which at first sight seems to lack all good.)

As for the second claim—(ii) that the Good is good not because it is desired, but it is desired because it is good—Plotinus clearly poses the problem specifically about the Good at VI.7 [38] 24.4–7 and states his position most explicitly at 25.16–18 and 27.26–27 of the same treatise (see also I.6 [1] 7.3–4). Thus, at VI.7 [38] 25.16–18 he writes: "The Good, therefore, must be desirable, but must not become good by being desirable, but become desirable by being good."[10] And VI.7 [38] 27.26–27 we read: "it is not the desire which makes the good but there is desire because there is a good."[11] And again, a similar point is made at III.1 [3] 1.22–24, where Plotinus affirms the priority of the object of will (βουλητόν) and of desire (ἐπιθυμητὸν, ὀρεκτὸν) over the willing and the desiring directed to it (an echo of Aristotle, *De anima* III.10.433a27–29, *Movement of Animals* 6.700b23–24, *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072a26–29).

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[10] VI.7 [38] 25.16–18: Ἐφετὸν μὲν οὖν δεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι, οὐ [17] μέντοι τῷ ἐφετὸν εἶναι ἀγαθὸν γίγνεσθαι ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀγαθὸν [18] εἶναι ἐφετὸν γίγνεσθαι.

[11] VI.7 [38] 27.26–27: οὐχ ἡ ἔφεσις ποιεῖ τὸ ἀγαθόν, [27] ἀλλ' ἡ ἔφεσις, ὅτι ἀγαθόν.

Taken together, these claims are simultaneously a refutation of Protagorean subjectivism[12] and an anticipation of the necessity of attuning one's desires to the End, a point with which I will deal extensively in the next chapter. Support for this view may come from a confrontation with that which in popular opinion was ordinarily considered as one of the strongest candidates for the title of the highest good, namely, pleasure (ἡδονή). According to Plotinus pleasure cannot be the Good, for it is not so much that there is goodness because there is pleasure, as that there is pleasure because there is goodness. In other words, generally speaking pleasure is to be considered an affection (πάθος) which follows as matter of course from the presence of some good, on which the affection depends essentially. For Plotinus one would not be satisfied with the mere affection if the good on which the affection depends (e.g., the child in whom a parent rejoices, the food that satisfies one's hunger, the person with whom a lover shares the joys of sex) were absent (cf. VI.7 [38] 24.10–12, 26.16–24). Thus, pleasure is not itself the good we seek when we are in need of something, but is rather what essentially accompanies or completes the presence of that good, which alone satisfies the need.

Plotinus' indebtedness to Aristotle's discussion of pleasure (*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.11–14 and especially X.1–5), particularly the notion that pleasure is not itself the good but only the supervening perfection of an activity, is palpable in chapters 24–26 and 29–30 of *Enneads* VI.7 [38]. The other main influence on Plotinus' understanding of pleasure is, unsurprisingly, Plato, specifically the view, introduced in the *Philebus* (31b2–32b8), according to which pleasure is the restoration (ἀναχώρησις) of a harmonious mixture, of which pain is the corruption or disintegration (φθορά). For the Socrates of the *Philebus* pleasure as restoration depends essentially on a need or lack, of which desire, conceived of as an emptiness seeking to be filled, is the fundamental manifestation (see *Philebus* 34d1–36c2). Thus, pleasure is understood as the process (γένεσις)—as opposed to stable being, or being simply (οὐσία)—which re-establishes the harmonious state. As such, pleasure stands to the harmonious state in a relation of a means to an end, and therefore it cannot be the good sought after (*Philebus* 53c4–55a11).

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[12] Cf. Protagoras, DK 80.B1. For short accounts of Protagorean subjectivism, or conventionalism, see W. K. C. Guthrie (1971, 181–192), Reale (2004, II, 55–68).

Now, if pleasure is minimally taken to mean the state accompanying the presence of the good which satisfies a given need (see VI.7 [38] 25.1–16, 29.1–10), we must infer that since in the Good there is no need whatsoever, neither will there be pleasure (VI.7 [38] 29). However, in the *Philebus* (see especially 20d1–23b10, 59d1–64b9) Plato argues that the good which human life should seek might have to be a mixture of pleasure and intelligence (φρόνησις, νοῦς). How can this be so if, according to Plotinus, neither pleasure nor intelligence (not even that intelligence which is Intellect) are, as such, the Good? The simple answer, provided by Plotinus himself at VI.7 [38] 25.12–13, is that here Plato is not investigating the Good which is the One, but our good, the good which is limited to our condition, the human condition (cf. Plato, *Philebus* 21d9, 22a5, 61b5, d2).[13]

Should we then assert that also Intellect is deprived of all pleasure, and that pleasure is associated incidentally only to human intelligence? Yes, but only insofar as Intellect is always in possession of the object of its love, the One. However, the term "pleasure" can be used also figuratively. In his exegesis of the relation of pleasure and intelligence in the *Philebus* provided at *Enneads* VI.7 [38] 25.1–16 and chapter 30, Plotinus thinks that the mixture of pleasure and intelligence (νοῦς) does not mean that the former accompanies the latter in the usual way in which pleasure completes an activity, that is, "as a supervening end" (ὡς ἐπιγιγνόμενόν τι τέλος: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.4.1174b32–33) extrinsically grafted onto the substantial activity of intelligence, for if it did, potentiality would be introduced in Intellect, which is contrary to the Plotinus' view of the second hypostasis as pure actuality that we discussed in Chapter 2. On the contrary, this distinctively noetic pleasure is itself intrinsically united with the activity of intelligence. It follows that if Plato speaks of "mixing" in the *Philebus*, he does so not literally but metaphorically (μεταφέροντες: Plotinus VI.7 [38] 30.27). Thus, by arguing that intelligence is mixed with pleasure, what Plato is saying, according to Plotinus, is that the very activity (ἐνέργημα: VI.7 [38] 30.22)[14] and life of Intellect is itself "a state most pleasing and acceptable" (κατάστασιν ἀσμενιστὴν καὶ αἱρετωτάτην: VI.7 [38] 30.23–24). But since this is said figuratively, Plotinus insists that the pleasure at issue here is not to be conceived of as ordinary pleasure but as "pure and unmixed" (τὸ καθαρόν τε καὶ εἰλικρινὲς: Plato, *Philebus* 52d6–7, cited verbatim at *Enneads* vi.7 [38] 30.22).[15] Thus, it can be associated with the kind of activity and life of Intellect, ever actual and eternal, with which it constitutes an essential unity. The presence of pleasure in the second hypostasis also implies that pleasure is not in itself evil. In his commentary of vi.7 [38] 24–26 and 29–30, P. Hadot[16] clearly summarizes Plotinus' reading of the *Philebus* on this point:

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[13] On Plotinus' general interpretation of the *Philebus* see Schwyzer (1970).

[14] On this point Plotinus may again have Aristotle in mind as the latter describes pleasure as an activity (ἐνέργεια) as opposed to a movement or a process (κίνησις): cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.3–4.

> L'expression « mêlé au plaisir » [vi.7 [38] 30.24–25: ἡδονῇ μεμίχθαι] est, en somme, employée par Platon pour deux raisons. Tout d'abord, pour faire désirer l'activité spirituelle, pour faire entrevoir qu'elle est un bien, qu'elle est désirable, ensuite, pour faire comprendre qu'elle produit, dans l'Esprit ou dans l'âme qui l'exercent, un état lumineux et calme qui correspond à ce que Platon appelle par ailleurs le plaisir pur.

We might add, in passing, that since pleasure is not to be found in the Good, to allow for the presence of pleasure in the noetic realm may also be one of the reasons for denying Intellect the title of ultimate good. This does not mean that Intellect lacks goodness and is undesirable; only that it remains desirable to the extent that through it one already divines (ἀπομαντεύεται: vi.7 [38] 29.21) the Good which lies beyond it (see vi.7 [38] 24.17–30, 28.26–29, 29.10–31, and chapter 39). Another reason in support of this conclusion is that Intellect is not desired by all things: specifically, not by things without intellect (vi.7 [38] 20.16–24). In fact, as Plotinus argues at vi.7 [38] 15.1–13, if Intellect is desirable at all, it is because it resembles the Good, or is ἀγαθοειδές (line 9, an allusion to Plato, *Republic* vi.509a3).[17]

One may argue that there are patent discrepancies between different elements of Plotinus' view of pleasure, namely: from Aristotle, (1) the understanding of pleasure as a supervening end (*Nicomachean Ethics* x.4.1174b32–33) and (2) the notion of pleasure as an activity as opposed to pleasure as a process or motion (*Nicomachean Ethics* x.3–4); from Plato, (3) the view of pleasure as a process of restoration (*Philebus* 31b2–32b8, 34d1–36c2) and (4) the understanding of pleasure as one of the two ingredients making up the mixture which is the human good, the other ingredient being reason or intelligence (e.g., *Philebus* 11b4–14b8, 20d1–23b10, 59d1–64b9). Plotinus seems to manage to salvage all these elements by interpretively relating them to different aspects of his metaphysics. Thus, (1), Aristotle's understanding of pleasure as a supervening end, may still be true of ordinary pleasures but it applies to Intellect only if the term "pleasure" is understood metaphorically and its accompanying of the activity of Intellect is understood essentially rather than chronologically. By contrast, (2), the Aristotelian view of pleasure as an activity, applies to the life of Intellect, but in light of (3), the Platonic notion of pleasure as a process of restoration, it cannot be true of ordinary pleasures. As for (4), Plato's understanding of pleasure as an ingredient in the mixture which is the *human* good, Plotinus subscribes to it, but changes its sphere of reference (i.e., not embodied human life, but the life of Intellect) and takes the term "pleasure" metaphorically. Finally, (1) and (3), the Aristotelian notion of pleasure as a supervening activity and the Platonic view of it as a process of restoration, must be thought of as compatible descriptions of ordinary pleasures (although not of pleasure in Intellect[18]).

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[15] According to Plotinus' peculiar exegesis (vi.7 [38] 30.25–29), this kind of "pure and unmixed" activity and pleasure are figuratively expressed through images in Plato (*Symposium* 203b5: "drunk with the nectar"; *Phaedrus* 247a8: "to feast at the banquet") and Homer (*Iliad* v.426, xv.47: "the father smiled").

[16] P. Hadot (1988, 318–319).

[17] The question of what this resemblance consists of is posed repeatedly in this treatise (cf. vi.7 [38] 16.4–9, 18.1–2, 14–15, 48–51, 21.1).

Once it is found impossible to identify pleasure with the Good, since pleasure essentially depends on the prior presence of goodness, Plotinus is in a position both to refute a subjective or relativistic interpretation of the Good (i.e., that what is good is such not in itself, but in virtue of the desire directed toward it) and at the same time to point us in the direction of what we might call an education (or, given the connatural character of the soul's *eros*, a *re*-education) of desire. I speak of education in the sense that, although for Plotinus all things instinctively desire the Good or the One in accordance with the "firmest principle of all" (VI.5 [23] 1.9, cited at the beginning of this section), among these some (i.e., individual souls, or rather individual souls committed to identify themselves with their rational power and, eventually, with their love for the One) are also able to clarify this "instinctive" drive so as actually to dissociate themselves from their lower appetitive commitments and pursue the Good according to their proper nature. For this dissociation to be possible, a process of attunement to the End—what I just called an "education" of desire—is necessary. I shall deal with this process explicitly in the final two chapters. What still needs to be clarified at this point is the nature of the One from the perspective of the desirer, that is to say, the nature of the Good.

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[18] Cf. McGroarty (2006, 168–169).

2 The Good as the Universal Final Cause

I will attempt a clarification of the nature of the Good by focusing on the third and the fourth claim introduced early in the previous section—(iii) that the Good can be desired only for its own sake, and (iv) that the Good does not itself desire some further good.

Both claims have again antecedents in Plato and Aristotle. Thus, concerning the third claim, at *Lysis* 219b5–220b5 Plato argues that the truly final good, which in this dialogue is called τὸ φίλον ("what is dear" or "the beloved," most often translated as "the friend"), is that which is not desired for the sake of some further good. And in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.2.1094a18–22, Aristotle entertains the possibility of a universal final cause, even while not immediately committing himself to it.[19] On his part, Plotinus is particularly explicit at VI.8 [39] 7.3–4, where he states: "The nature of the Good is that which is to be desired for itself" (ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσις αὐτὸ τὸ ἐφετόν;[20] cf. also VI.8 [39] 7.31–32, 13.16–18). Concerning the fourth claim, support from Plato may be found at *Symposium* 200c5–e6 and 205d10–206a1, where Socrates remarks that even if I were to possess a desired good, I would still desire to possess it forever, points to the fundamental lack that characterizes all temporal desire, a lack which as such must be absent in the Good (and Intellect, which is in permanent possession of its desideratum). In Aristotle, the First Mover moves by being loved (*Metaphysics* XII.7.1072a26–b3) while itself not loving anything, its noetic activity being wholly self-contained. In an analogous way (but, as we shall see in the next section, also with some important differences), the Good, seeking nothing outside of itself, in the *Enneads* is called "most self-sufficient" (ἀνενδεέστατον: VI.9 [9] 6.18; αὐταρκέστατον: V.4 [7] 1.12, VI.7 [38] 23.7, VI.9 [9] 6.17, 24; ἱκανώτατον: VI.9 [9] 6.17).[21]

These two claims—again, (iii) that the Good can be desired only for its own sake, and (iv) that the Good does not itself desire some further good—essentially belong together. What they express is fundamental to the very nature of the One conceived as the Good, for if this were desired for the sake of some other good or if it itself desired some further good, it could not be truly final: it could not truly be the Good. At VI.7 [38] 24.13–16 Plotinus even asks whether the Good can be good for itself, and remarks that a positive answer to this question is laughable, for it would imply some kind of lack in the Good (VI.7 [38] 27.22–24, and more explicitly 41.28–31).

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[19] See Irwin (1999, 173), substantially unaltered on this point in Irwin (2019, 205). Cf. also Aristotle, *De anima* I.3.406b8–10, *Protrepticus* fr. 12 (= Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* IX.52.16–25), and the broader passages from which I extrapolated the references to Aristotle for the first claim in the previous section (see note 8 above).

[20] The translation is from Gerson (2018). The statement is an echo of Plato, *Philebus* 60b10, and as regards the content, of *Philebus* 20d7–10, 60b10–c4 and of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1.1094a2–3: cf. HS$_2$ *ad loc.*

[21] On the self-sufficiency of the Good see also I.7 [54] 1.13–15, I.8 [51] 2.4–5, III.8 [30] 11.10–11, V.5 [32] 12.40–50, 13.1–5, VI.7 [38] 24.13–16, 29.9–10, 41.28–31. Cf. Plato, *Republic* II.381b1–2, *Philebus* 20d7–10, 22b3–8, 53e4–54c12, 60b10–c4; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.1097b7–8, 14, X.7.1177b21.

It may be objected that this does not seat well with the interpretation of henologic *eros* as love directed to nothing other than itself given in Chapter 2. In reply, I think it can be said that when Plotinus first says that the Good is not good for itself (see again VI.7 [38] 24.13–16 and 41.28–31 and further 27.22–24) and then describes the One in terms of *eros* (VI.8 [39] 15.1–2 and 16.12–14), he is stressing a fairly similar point but in two different contexts, or he is emphasizing two different aspects of the same issue. The first context (that of the passages from VI.7 [38] where Plotinus denies that the Good can be good for itself) is that of a Platonic transposition of the Stoic notion of "appropriation" or "affinity" (οἰκείωσις),[22] that is, the natural love that every being bears toward itself. Plotinus' view is that while other things are good both for themselves and for other things, the Good is good only for others.[23] The second context (that of the passages from VI.8 [39] where the One is described as *eros*) is the discussion about the freedom of the One, in which *eros* is not the expression of a lack but a self-positing and productive spontaneity that gives rise to multiplicity. Thus, in the first case Plotinus is stressing that what it takes for something to be the Good, or the universal final cause in the general context of desire, is the very absence of desire understood in its appetitive aspect. By contrast, in the second case he is showing that for an unqualifiedly simple principle to be considered productive of multiplicity, its simplicity must be understood in terms of an infinite *erotic* power, as I argued in Part 1.

Obviously, if one rejects the possibility of the unicity of the End (i.e., the fact that the there can be one and only one highest desideratum), these conclusions will be untenable. But even if one concedes that the End is unique, an important question remains: Why should such an ultimate desideratum be identical with the One, the absolutely simple Principle of all? Why not stop at Intellect or something like it, such as the Aristotelian First Mover of Book XII of the *Metaphysics*?

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[22] E.g., Chrysippus, SVF III.178–189.

[23] Cf. P. Hadot (1988, 307).

I will try to answer these questions by way of a summary reading of the opening chapter of treatise I.7 [54] *On the primal Good and the other goods* (Περὶ τοῦ πρώτου ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν: VP 24.30).[24] Here is the full text of this passage (the divisions of the text, given in italic,[25] are mine):[26]

A. *Common presuppositions* (*I.7* [*54*] *1.1–7*)

1. *The good of each thing is the thing's proper activity according to nature* (*1–4*).

Could one say that the good for each thing was anything else than the activity of its life according to nature? And if something was made up of many parts would not its good be the proper and never-failing activity according to nature of the best part of it?

2. *The good of the best soul is the Good* (*4–7*).

So the soul's activity will be its good according to nature. Now if it is of the best sort itself and its activity is directed towards the best, this best will not only be the good for it, but it will also be the good absolutely.

B. *The primal good: the Good* (*I.7* [*54*] *1.7–28*)

1. *The Good is that in which other beings participate…* (*7–12*)

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[24] As Igal (1982–1998, I, 295–296, note 1), among others, rightly points out, the title of I.7 [54] given at VP 24.30 and maintained by all major editors and translators of the *Enneads*, *On the primal good and the other goods*, fits the contents of the treatise better than that given in the chronological list of treatises at VP 6.24, *On well-being* (Περὶ εὐδαιμονίας), and at the same time allows us to avoid confusion with treatise I.4 [46] *On well-being*.

[25] For analogous divisions see Igal (1982–1998, I, 296), Pigler (2002, 41–43).

[26] I.7 [54] 1.1–28: Ἆρ' ἄν τις ἕτερον εἴποι ἀγαθὸν ἑκάστῳ εἶναι ἢ τὴν [2] κατὰ φύσιν τῆς ζωῆς ἐνέργειαν, καὶ εἴ τι ἐκ πολλῶν εἴη [3] τούτῳ εἶναι ἀγαθὸν τὴν τοῦ ἀμείνονος ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνέργειαν [4] οἰκείαν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἀεὶ μηδὲν ἐλλείπουσαν; Ψυχῆς δὴ [5] ἐνέργεια τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἀγαθὸν αὐτῇ. Εἰ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸ [6] ἄριστον ἐνεργοῖ ἀρίστη οὖσα, οὐ μόνον πρὸς αὐτὴν τὸ [7] ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἁπλῶς τοῦτο ἀγαθὸν ἂν εἴη. Εἰ οὖν τι [8] μὴ πρὸς ἄλλο ἐνεργοῖ ἄριστον ὂν τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἐπέκεινα [9] τῶν ὄντων, πρὸς αὐτὸ δὲ τὰ ἄλλα, δῆλον, ὡς τοῦτο ἂν εἴη [10] τὸ ἀγαθόν, δι' ὃ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀγαθοῦ μεταλαμβάνειν ἔστι· [11] τὰ δὲ ἄλλα διχῶς ἂν ἔχοι, ὅσα οὕτω τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ τῷ [12] πρὸς αὐτὸ ὡμοιῶσθαι καὶ τῷ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ποιεῖσθαι. [13] Εἰ οὖν ἔφεσις καὶ ἐνέργεια πρὸς τὸ ἄριστον [14] ἀγαθόν, δεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν μὴ πρὸς ἄλλο βλέπον μηδ' ἐφιέμενον [15] ἄλλου ἐν ἡσύχῳ οὖσαν πηγὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν ἐνεργειῶν [16] κατὰ φύσιν οὖσαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθοειδῆ ποιοῦσαν οὐ τῇ [17] πρὸς ἐκεῖνα ἐνεργείᾳ—ἐκεῖνα γὰρ πρὸς αὐτήν—οὐ τῇ [18] ἐνεργείᾳ οὐδὲ τῇ νοήσει τἀγαθὸν εἶναι, ἀλλ' αὐτῇ μονῇ [19] τἀγαθὸν εἶναι. Καὶ γὰρ ὅτι ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας, ἐπέκεινα [20] καὶ ἐνεργείας καὶ ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ νοήσεως. Καὶ γὰρ αὖ [21] τοῦτο δεῖ τἀγαθὸν τίθεσθαι, εἰς ὃ πάντα ἀνήρτηται, αὐτὸ [22] δὲ εἰς μηδέν· οὕτω γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς τὸ οὗ πάντα ἐφίεται. [23] Δεῖ οὖν μένειν αὐτό, πρὸς αὐτὸ δὲ ἐπιστρέφειν πάντα, [24] ὥσπερ κύκλον πρὸς κέντρον ἀφ' οὗ πᾶσαι γραμμαί. Καὶ [25] παράδειγμα ὁ ἥλιος ὥσπερ κέντρον ὢν πρὸς τὸ φῶς τὸ [26] παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀνηρτημένον πρὸς αὐτόν· πανταχοῦ γοῦν μετ' [27] αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἀποτέτμηται· κἂν ἀποτεμεῖν ἐθελήσῃς ἐπὶ [28] θάτερα, πρὸς τὸν ἥλιόν ἐστι τὸ φῶς. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified.

Then if something does not direct its activity towards another thing, since it is the best of beings and beyond all beings, and all other things direct their activities towards it, it is obvious that this will be the Good, through which other things are enabled to participate in good. All the other things which have the good like this will have it in two ways, by being made like it and by directing their activity towards it.

2. *…while it abides in itself beyond being, activity, and Intellect;…* (*13–20*)

So if the aspiration and activity towards the best is good, the Good must not look or aspire to something else, but stay quiet and be the spring and origin of activities according to nature, and make other things in the form of good, not by its activity directed to them—for they are directed to it, their source. It must be the Good not by activity or thought, but by reason of its very abiding.[27] For because it is "beyond being,"[28] it is also beyond activity, Intellect, and intellection.

3. *…it is that on which everything depends and which everything desires* (*20–22*).

For, to put it another way, one must assume the Good to be that on which everything depends and which itself depends on nothing; for so the statement is true that it is "that to which everything aspires."[29]

4. *The center of a circle and the sun as illustrations of the Good* (*23–28*).

So it must itself abide, while all things turn back to it, as a circle does to the center from which all the radii come. The sun, too, is an example, since it is like a center in relation to the light which comes

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[27] At I.7 [54] 1.18 we have a textual crux. The major editors and translators variously endorse one of the following readings: (i) αὐτῇ μόνῃ (HS$_1$, Igal 1982–1998); (ii) αὐτῇ <τῇ> μονῇ (Creuzer 1835, Kirchhoff 1856, Volkmann 1883, Cilento 1947–1949, Pigler 2004); (iii) αὐτὴ μόνη (Bréhier 1924–1938); (iv) αὐτῇ μονῇ (HS$_2$, ARMSTRONG); (v) τῇ μονῇ (Theiler, in Harder 1956–1971). It seems to me that the difference of opinions on the reading of the text does not significantly affect the overall philosophical sense of the passage, as a comparison of some of the translations proposed might indicate (e.g., Ficino 1492: "seipso tantum"; Creuzer 1835: "ipsa permansione"; Bouillet 1857–1861: "seulement par la *permanence*"; H. F. Müller 1878–1880: "durch sein Verharren in sich selbst"; K. S. Guthrie 1918: "Only by permanence"; MacKenna 1917–1930, and MacKenna and Page 1969: "by its very rest within itself"; Bréhier 1924–1938: "parce qu'il rest ce qu'il est"; Harder 1956–1971: "eben vermöge eines Stillestehens"; Cilento 1947–1949: "solo per quel suo quieto restare"; Faggin 2000: "perché rimane quello che è"; ARMSTRONG: "by reason of its very abiding"; Igal 1982–1998: "por sí solo"; Mizuchi, Tanogashira and Tanaka 1986–1988: ただただ自己自身にとどまっていること, *tadatada jikojishin ni todomatte iru koto*; Pigler 2004: "parce qu'il demeure lui-même"; Radice: "per la sua stabile permanenza"; J.-F. Pradeau, in Brisson and Pradeau 2002–2010: "parce qu'il demeure en lui-même"; Gerson 2018: "by remaining in itself").

[28] Plato, *Republic* VI.509b9.

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1.1094a3.

> from it and depends on it; for the light is everywhere with it and is not cut off from it; even if you wanted to cut it off on one side, the light remains with the sun.

The questions asked at lines 1–4 of this passage seem to be rhetorical and presuppose positive answers. They are initially directed to establishing some common ground between Plotinus and his predecessors, most notably Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. Thus, according to all these authors, including Plotinus, any given thing naturally possesses a specific operation (ἔργον), activity (ἐνέργεια), or excellence (ἀρετή), which is identical with the end (τέλος) or the good of that thing; and if the thing is complex, its specific operation will be that of its best part or element.[30] But this is also where the general agreement between these authors ends. In what follows I will confine my account to contrasting Plotinus' and Aristotle's positions on the matter and omit the views of the Stoics as they are not immediately relevant to my point.[31]

According to Aristotle the proper operation (ἔργον) of soul is life, and that of the *human* soul, which is a kind of soul endowed with reason (λόγος), is a particular kind of life, namely, the good life, or the life of virtue (ἀρετή). He writes at *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.1098a12–18 (my translation):[32]

> Thus, if {we take the proper human operation to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be an activity and action of the soul that involve reason, and if the function of the excellent man is to do these things well and finely, and finally if each thing is well accomplished [when done] in accordance with its proper virtue; if so,} the human good will be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most perfect virtue.

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[30] See Plato, *Republic* I.352d8–354a9; Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* I.8.1098a15–17 (and more broadly I.7.1097b22–1098a20), II.6.1106a15–24, X.7.1177a12–17, *Eudemian Ethics* II.1.1218b37–1219a29, *On the Heavens* II.3.286a8–9, *Protrepticus* fr. 6 (= Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VII.41.15–43.25); for the Stoics see Chrysippus, SVF III.2–19, especially especially 13 (where Zeno is also mentioned) and 16 (where Zeno and Cleanthes are also mentioned).

[31] For a concise treatment of the contrast between Plotinian and Stoic views on this point see Pigler (2004, 54–57).

[32] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.1098a12–18: εἰ δ' οὕτως [13] {ἀνθρώπου δὲ τίθεμεν ἔργον ζωήν τινα, ταύτην δὲ ψυχῆς ἐνέργειαν [14] καὶ πράξεις μετὰ λόγου, σπουδαίου δ' ἀνδρὸς εὖ ταῦτα καὶ [15] καλῶς, ἕκαστον δ' εὖ κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν ἀποτελεῖται· [16] εἰ δ' οὕτω,} τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται [17] κατ' ἀρετήν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ [18] τελειοτάτην. Bywater (1894, *ad* 1098a13–16) deletes the text I placed between curly brackets at lines 13–15, noting: "repetitio esse videtur eorum quae praecedunt" (i.e., of 1098a3–8).

The centerpiece of the life described by Aristotle is an activity for whose sake all other activities should be performed, hence an activity which constitutes the highest and final good of human life. This activity is contemplation (θεωρία), as Aristotle argues in chapters 6–8 of *Nicomachean Ethics* X. However, according to Aristotle the soul is the first actuality (ἐντελέχεια) of the body, as he writes at *De anima* II.1.412a27–28: "the soul is the first actuality of a natural body that is potentially alive" (ἡ ψυχή ἐστιν ἐντελέχεια ἡ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος; cf. also *De anima* II.1.412b4–6). Therefore, just like every other sensible substance, for Aristotle a human being is a concrete compound or composite (σύνολον) of matter and form, which as such cannot exist if these two elements are separated. Insofar as it is a sensible substance, the individual human being is thus a composite of body and soul (*De anima* II.1.412b6–9, 413a3–7, *Metaphysics* VII.11.1037a29–33, 15.1039b20–27; cf. also *Parts of Animals* I.1.641a17–32, *Metaphysics* VII.10.1035b14–31, VIII.4.1043a34–b4, XIII.2.1077b8–9). For this reason, Aristotle does not admit of an end—that is, a properly *human* end—prior to the interaction or joined status of soul and body in a compound, and so for a human being the activity of contemplation will always occur in an incarnate condition.[33]

For Plotinus, by contrast, the good of the soul cannot be that of a particular kind of soul, but ought to be the good of soul insofar as it is soul, that is to say, an activity (ἐνέργεια) that belongs to soul as such, not to this or that type of soul , nor to soul under these or those circumstances. But what is soul as such, soul qua soul? I observed that according to Aristotle the activity of contemplation is possible only intermittently for human beings, even in their best condition, since our incarnate state requires that we pay some attention to the needs intrinsic to this state (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.8.1178b33–35). For Plotinus, instead, the soul is united with body only incidentally, while by itself it is a self-subsisting immaterial principle (see IV.7 [2], especially chapter 10, IV.8 [6] 7.1–14, IV.9 [8] 4.5–26; cf. also VI.4 [22] 5). And while in its incarnate condition, part of the activity of the individual soul is to care for that portion of matter with which it is associated by shaping it and sustaining it as a body, in its disincarnate or purified state, which for our present purposes may be said to amount to its rational part or power (τὸ λογιστικόν), the soul turns toward higher realities and its proper activity is the constant contemplation of Intellect.[34]

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[33] Aristotle does consider the possibility of some separable (χωριστόν) capacity of the soul, most notably the so-called νοῦς ποιητικός (a phrase not occurring in Aristotle) of *De anima* III.5, especially 430a17–25 (cf. also *De anima* I.1.403a10–16, II.2.413b11–29, III.4.429a10–13). If I confine this possibility to a footnote, it is on account of the notoriously tormented exegesis of this portion of *De anima* (for a very brief overview of opinions from antiquity, cf. W. D. Ross 1961, 41–44), which would require far more attention than I could to dedicate to it here and would lead us a little too far from our main discussion.

Even so, for Plotinus Intellect as the object of contemplation is not ultimate but is only the last step that precedes the higher contemplation of the One or the Good. This is because, as we saw, Intellect is already a secondary kind of unity, or a unity in multiplicity, which as such is always already erotically directed beyond itself, toward the One as the source of all reality. In other words, if the highest or best element in soul is the rational element whereby the soul is constantly connected to Intellect to the point of having Intellect within itself, so to speak (see I.1 [53] 13.5–8, III.8 [30] 5.10–17, V.3 [49] 3.15–34),[35] then this connection already implies a directedness toward that unity which is prior to Intellect, namely, the One. But the One is also the Source, the Good whereby every thing is; therefore, as Plotinus points out at lines 5–7 of the first chapter of our treatise, I.7 [54], the good of the soul will be at the same time the Good unqualifiedly or simply (ἁπλῶς: I.7 [54] 1.7), that is, the universal final cause.

Before I continue my summary exegesis of I.7 [54] 1, we must ask: Why should the One be the universal good, the Good? And why should the One be both efficient and final cause, ἀρχή and τέλος of all reality? These questions can be answered analytically (in the Kantian sense) with reference to the interpretation of henologic superabundance given in Chapter 2. Thus, that the Principle is also the final cause, or universal desideratum, is necessarily part of the very concept of a Principle which, in giving what it does not have (i.e., in bestowing on what it engenders a love for the One as other than the thing engendered), it endows all derived reality with a love directed to that very Principle qua Good. Put somwhat differently, the One is the universal beloved, truly that which is most loved (ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15), because for all derived reality to be or to exist means to be erotically directed toward it: we love it because we were made to love it; or rather, to avoid the notion that the One *needs* to be loved, we love it because we were made as lovers of it (to love it is good relative to us, not for the One, since the One abides transcendently in perfect self-sufficiency).

This argument is not explicitly worked out in the *Enneads* but, as I said, I believe it can be safely derived in analytic fashion from the concept of a universe in which what the Principle imparts on all that is derived from it is love for the

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[34] On the purification of the soul in its embodied state see Plotinus I.6 [1] 7, III.6 [26] 5, VI.9 [9] 7. On noetic contemplation as the peculiar activity of the purified soul, see IV.8 [6] 3.25–30, V.1 [10] 3.16–20; cf. also I.5 [36] 10.10–23, III.8 [30] 5–6.

[35] Cf. also I.1 [53] 11, IV.3 [27] 12.4–8, IV.7 [2] 10.32–37, 13.12–14, VI.4 [22] 14, and my remarks in Section 4 of Chapter 1 and Subsection 1.2 of Chapter 5.

Principle qua Good and qua other than what derives from it. The point is less trivial than it might seem at first, for if one does not grant that it is the One itself that instills love in the whole of derived reality, the very origin of love is bound to remain unexplained and the identity of the final cause (if there is one to begin with, and whatever this might be) questionable. At the same time, this argument may be interpreted as a critical supplement to Aristotle's observation that if there is no final aim of desire, desire itself will be empty and vain. The Aristotelian text where we find this observation is *Nicomachean Ethics* I.2.1094a18–22:[36]

> Suppose, then, that the things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things, and that we do not choose everything because of something else—for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile. Clearly, this end will be the good, that is to say, the best good.

Now, if it is true that in order *not* to be in vain, all desire needs a truly final end (which is the core of Aristotle's observation), it is also true that in order *not* to be left unexplained, desire likewise necessarily requires a source which justifies both its aim and its presence in the soul (which is the supplement that one is allowed to infer from Plotinus, I believe). And if the truly final cause, formally understood as that which has no further end beyond itself (in accordance with our two claims under discussion), provides desire with an end and saves desire from the danger of being empty and vain, the specific identity of this final cause, which for Aristotle is thought thinking itself (*Metaphysics* XII.9.1074b34–35), will remain arbitrary, unless this cause is at the same time the origin of the desire by which it is desired (which is precisely the case of the Plotinian One). Thus, it will not be enough to say, with Aristotle, that the final cause is the universal beloved and that this moves the heavens by being loved (ὡς ἐρώμενον: *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072b3), but it will be necessary to add that the final cause can be so loved because it is at the same time the origin of this love, or because love for the Principle qua other than the entity issuing from it is what the Principle bestows on derived reality (cf. VI.7 [38] 22.17–19 and Chapter 2 note 69 for the Greek text).

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[36] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.2.1094a18–22: Εἰ δή τι τέλος ἐστὶ τῶν [19] πρακτῶν ὃ δι' αὑτὸ βουλόμεθα, τἆλλα δὲ διὰ τοῦτο, καὶ μὴ [20] πάντα δι' ἕτερον αἱρούμεθα πρόεισι γὰρ οὕτω γ' εἰς ἄπειρον, [21] ὥστ' εἶναι κενὴν καὶ ματαίαν τὴν ὄρεξιν, δῆλον ὡς τοῦτ' ἂν [22] εἴη τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον. The translation is by Irwin (1999).

From this perspective, love is indirectly also the key to Plotinus' critique of the Aristotelian First Mover as unsuitable to serve as the Principle or ἀρχή of all, not only because, from Plotinus' viewpoint, the inescapable internal duality of the Mover's activity, self-thinking thought, is at once an index of its lack of complete unity and erotic self-identity (which are prerogatives of the universal ἀρχή: see for instance VI.7 [38] 37–42), but also because qua universal ἀρχή the First Mover would leave the desire directed to it ultimately unexplained.

An argument along these lines is explicitly formulated by Proclus, who writes in his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* I, 267.4–12 (my translation):

> If in fact the cosmos loves [ἐρᾷ] Intellect, just as Aristotle says,[37] and moves [κινεῖται] toward it, whence does it have that desire [ἔφεσιν]? For since the cosmos is not the First, it is necessary that it possesses that desire from a cause [απ' ἀιτίας] that moves it to love [εἲς τὸ ἐρᾶν]; in fact, [Aristotle] himself says[38] that the desired is the mover of the desirer [κινητικὸν [...] τό ὀρεκτὸν τοῦ ὀρεκτικοῦ]. If this is true, and the cosmos has such an aspiration [ὀρεκτικὸν [...] τοῦ εκεινοῦ] through its own being [τῷ εἶναι] and according to its own nature [κατὰ φύσιν], it is manifest that the whole being of the cosmos derives from that same [source] from which comes its desire [τὸ εἶναι ὀρεκτικόν].

In a note to his French translation of this text from Proclus, Festugière[39] aptly asks: "Pour désirer, il faut que le Monde existe : d'où lui vient l'être ? Il est par nature désirant : d'où lui vient cette nature ?" An analogous idea is found again in another passage by Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* III.788.11–19; the conclusion at lines 18–19 is most explicit: "that cause of all will be not only final [τελικόν] but also efficient [ποιητικόν]" (my translation).[40] Plotinus, on his part, employs a similar language at *Enneads* VI.2 [43] 11.25–26 and most emphatically at 11.38 of the same treatise and at VI.9 [9] 9.21, where the One is explicitly called "origin and end" (ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος; cf. also III.8 [30] 7.17–18).[41]

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[37] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072b3.

[38] Aristotle, *Movement of Animals* 6.700b35–701a1, *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072a26; cf. Plotinus III.1 [3] 1.22–24.

[39] Festugière (1966–1968, II, 108 note 4).

[40] See also Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 12 and 31, including Dodd's comments in the relevant endnotes.

[41] Similar jargon is also found at V.8 [31] 7.44–47 (where Plotinus borrows from Aristotle, *Physics* I.5.188a27–30), although the focus of this passage is not the One but Intellect. It must be noted that not all Neoplatonists are in agreement about this reading of Aristotle. For example, Ammonius, a student of Proclus at Athens, attributes the view by which Proclus criticizes Aristotle to Aristotle himself (in Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 1363.8–12).

With this in mind, let us return to the text from Aristotle I cited above, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1094a18–22, and dwell a little longer on the reason why Plotinus would think that Aristotle's conjecture about the possibility of a universal final end may lack proper justification. In the commentary to this text in his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, T. Irwin writes that the options outlined by Aristotle in this passage are not two—i.e., either (1) we choose everything for the sake of something else or (2) we choose for the sake of a highest end—but three. In fact, "[t]he argument does not justify us in dismissing [(3)] the possibility of choosing several things for their own sakes, without choosing everything for the sake of just one end"[42] (a possibility explicitly considered and qualified by Aristotle: cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.1097b1–6). I think that Irwin is right about Aristotle as far as the argument goes at this point of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But if the problem of having to juggle several options subsists at all, it is because Aristotle does not deduce the desire for whatever is good from a universal ἀρχή whose paramount gift to all derived reality is precisely a love which, if followed correctly, will lead back to its own source, the Good by which all things are good. In other words, the possibility of showing that desire is a path toward an end which is both non-arbitrary and truly final is precluded unless this end is at the same time the very origin of desire. Or yet again, all desire does have some end, but one will hardly be able to argue persuasively for an end over another (which is what Aristotle *does* argue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*), unless the end in question is at the same time the first efficient cause of desire in the desirer, or unless desire for a certain end is understood as the distinctive "gift" of that very end to the desirer, a gift whereby end and origin of desire coincide.

One may ask: Why couldn't the End and Principle of all impart a love for something other than itself? At the very least, because if it imparted a love for anything less than the Good (that is, anything inferior to itself), it would not be the Good. But let me be clear. I am not arguing that Aristotle does not conceive of the First Mover as both the universal efficient cause (in the sense that it is the first originator of the motion of the heavens, leaving aside the question of whether it is also the origin of the very existence of things) and the universal final cause (in the sense that it is the ultimate object of love by which the heavens move). All I am claiming is that, according to my interpretation of Plotinus, Aristotle is not entitled to make such an identification because it leaves the very love that is at work in this dynamic unexplained. And I believe that this may be the reason why attempts to show that the Aristotelian First Mover is an efficient cause in any other way than by being loved are generally unpersuasive. I thus concur with W. D. Ross as he writes that the Aristotelian "God is the efficient cause by being the final cause, but in no other way."[43]

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[42] Irwin (1999, 173).

Far from opposing the logic I see operative in Plotinus' identification of efficient and final cause, Aristotle himself actually seems to endorse it, although he does not explicitly go as far as Plotinus. In fact, in order to show that the virtue or excellence of what is best in us is the final end of human beings (which he conceptualizes under the heading of happiness, εὐδαιμονία), he introduces the well known ἔργον argument (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1097b22–1098a20), resulting in the conclusion that what we desire is identical with the proper work (ἔργον) of the human being. This proper work, in turn, is "an active life of the [part of the soul] that has reason" (πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.1098a3–4, my translation), or an "activity of the soul in accordance with reason or not lacking reason" (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.1098a7–8, my translation). But the question could be asked of Aristotle: Why *should* we desire such an activity? And where does this desire come from? The answer presumably would be that we desire this activity because it is our proper ἔργον, which is like saying that we desire it in principle, or as an ultimate end, a final point beyond which we neither need nor should go. In other words, for Aristotle to ask for the origin of such a desire would amount to taking one step too many, for the desire for intellectual activity, the pure actuality of the Unmoved Mover, is itself something primarily given which is rooted in our very nature. To ask why we have such a nature is simply excessive.

On his part, Plotinus would be likely to contend that not only is this step not excessive, but that it is necessary, at least for explanatory reasons. In fact, it is only by taking such a step that one is able to offer an account of the desire for the Principle. But in doing so, the very nature of the Principle undergoes a transformation: no longer the noetic ἐνέργεια of the First Mover, but the erotic power of the One. If this is granted, then the possibility of choosing several things for their own sakes (i.e., what I labeled as option (3) in Irwin's commentary to Aristotle referenced earlier at note 42) is no longer an option, for according to Plotinus no derived thing (whether taken singly, together with some other derived things, or with the totality of derived things) will ever be able to provide a non-arbitrary explanation of how it can possibly be desired, let alone desired for its own sake, unless this thing is proved to be at the same time the origin of the very desire by which it is desired. But the only "thing" that can fulfill this condition is the One as both the universal ἀρχή and the universal τέλος—the Principle and the End.

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[43] W. D. Ross (1949a, 181); cf. Reale (2004, IV, 94–95, 100–101).

In short, according to this interpretation Plotinus thinks that the Aristotelian answer does not reach far enough. Therefore, he radicalizes Aristotle's argument by making desire for the universal final end depend, not on the particular nature of a given being, but on the very end of this desire. In this way the end becomes, quite literally, also the origin of the desire. Thus, one may echo W. D. Ross' statement I referenced in note 43 above and say that while the Aristotelian God is the universal efficient cause only by being the universal final cause, the Plotinian One is the universal final cause by being simultaneously the universal efficient cause.

If I am right about this interpretation of Plotinus, one may also read it as his indirect way to reply to Aristotle's criticism of Plato's Good found chiefly in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6, a criticism that is successful only to the extent to which Aristotle succeeds in subjecting Plato to his own standpoint both for what counts as good and for what admits of being subsumed under his own categorial scheme. Thus, in his opening notice to *Enneads* I.7 [54], Bréhier poignantly remarks that the Aristotelian argument is directed against Plato's Good, but that Aristotle's refutation of Plato makes sense primarily within a strictly Aristotelian framework, for[44]

> les arguments d'Aristote contre Platon tiraient toute leur valeur du point de vue pratique d'Aristote ; l'Idée platonicienne du Bien n'est point en effet quelque chose que l'on puisse acquérir par l'action ; ils perdent leur valeur, dès que le but devient une union au Bien par assimilation.

Let us now resume our direct reading of the first chapter of I.7 [34] from where we left off before my critical interlude on Aristotle. How is it that the Good is the Good? Plotinus' answer, which we find at lines 7–10, is that the Good is such by granting all things participation (line 10: μεταλαμβάνειν) in goodness. It is by virtue of this participation that lower (i.e., qualified[45]) goods are desirable and exist at all. At lines 10–12 Plotinus sketches two ways in which a thing can participate in the Good: by similarity (line 12: ὡμοιῶσθαι) and by directing its activity toward the Good. The two modes of participation correspond to the double causality which I have been discussing. Similarity is a direct consequence of the coincidence of the Good with the ἀρχή of all, or the universal efficient cause (in accordance with the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect), while directedness toward the Good is the clearest expression of the One's final causality, or of the fact that it alone is the universal τέλος. To put it another way, if I am directed toward the Good (τἀγαθόν), it is because I resemble it, or I am ἀγαθοειδής (line 16); but I am ἀγαθοειδής because τἀγαθόν is at the same time both my and the universal ἀρχή, the Principle of all.

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[44] Bréhier (1924–1938, I, 107).

[45] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.12.1152b26–27.

In trying to place the results of this section in the broader horizon of this study, we will recall that one of the main conclusions of Part 1 was that it is the notion of love that regulates the efficient causality of the Principle in Plotinus' metaphysics. More precisely, the erotic superabundance of the Principle was presented as the key to the hierarchical structuring of all reality. Here in Part 2, it is a matter of showing how the same notion of love is operative in conceiving of the Principle of all as identical with the End of all. For the moment, the point is simply to underline the fact that in Plotinus the two causalities are interdependent. Thus, the soul desires τἀγαθόν because it is ἀγαθοειδής; but it is ἀγαθοειδής, in turn, because τἀγαθόν is the name of the ἀρχή of all from the perspective of the desirer, much like ἀρχή was its name from the perspective of the generated, for if the Principle and Good is considered *in itself*, no name truly suits it (VI.9 [9] 5.31), since even "the One" is a title assigned to it by comparison with the many which derive from it (V.5 [32] 6.26–37).

To be ἀγαθοειδής for the soul, as for Intellect (cf. Chapter 2 note 109 for references), means to participate in the superabundant life of the One. And as I argued, this life is communicated to the whole of derived reality as love for the Source, which as universal and ultimate desideratum is identical with the Good. But this means that desire, or love followed correctly (ὀρθῶς: cf. Plato, *Symposium* 210a2 and 4, e3, 211b5 and 7), is the very locus where the manifestation of the identity of Principle and End is first given, the "place" beginning from which the explication of this coincidence becomes possible. And since this is true not only for soul but also for Intellect, we may understand why in the context of treatise I.7 [54] Plotinus introduces the identity between his Good and the Good of Plato's *Republic* (VI.509b6–10), which is beyond being, hence (according to his interpretation) beyond Intellect and the Aristotelian νόησις νοήσεως (Plotinus I.7 [54] 1.19–20). Insofar as the One is the origin and end of all desire, it cannot have a desideratum beyond itself. For this reason, it is said to abide in itself (line 18: αὐτῇ μονῇ; cf. VI.8 [39] 18.24). However, this restfulness (line 15: ἐν ἡσύχῳ) of the One should not be understood statically but dynamically. What it means for the One to be at rest, or transcendently to abide within itself without change, is fully to concide with its inexhaustible and self-contained actvity, its primary activity or the activity of the essence treated in my discussion of the Principle of Double Activity in Chapter 1.

The two images employed in the first chapter of treatise I.7 [54] to express the self-abiding status of the Principle and the dependence of derived reality on it are those of the center of a circle (lines 23–24) and of the sun (lines 24–28).[46] Concerning the first image, a remark from Pigler's commentary to the treatise in question should suffice as an explanation.

> L'attraction par le désir, déployée par l'image mathématique du cercle, a aussi pour finalité de libérer le sens éternisé de la production du Bien, ainsi que d'enchâsser la procession dans une nécessaire conversion au Principle. Cette métaphore du cercle montre que le Bien englobe toutes choses, qu'il est omniprésent, qu'il assure le principe d'une finalité par laquelle il est le bien de tout existant.[47]

As for the second image, that of the sun, through it Plotinus does not only place himself in the tradition of books VI and VII of Plato's *Republic*, but introduces at the same time an important development in this tradition. For if in Plato the sun/Good provides the attuned eye/soul with the sight/knowledge of what it illumines things, but arguably affords direct existence only to Forms or Ideas, in Plotinus the sun is both the source and the sustainer of light (I.7 [54] 1.26). Out of metaphor, this means that the One is both the giver and the sustainer of the existence of all reality, or of intelligible matter proximately and of all reality remotely. To illustrate this point, Plotinus alludes to the experiment of placing a screen in front of the sun or light source (see also VI.4 [22] 7.42–44).[48] I believe that what this experiment is meant to prove is, first, that light cannot sustain its own existence independently of its source: what the screen does is precisely to break the link between light and sun, so that the former is no longer able to shine (i.e., to be light, or, simply, to be) when cut off from the latter. Secondly, the illustration shows that the screen, while affecting light, does not directly affect the light source, in the sense that the sun still generates light in spite of the presence of the screen.

It may be objected that an affection on the product (i.e., in our experiment, light) already tells us something about the inability of the producer (i.e., the sun) to overcome *absolutely* the origin of the affection (i.e., the screen). Two replies can be offered to this criticism. First, we should remind ourselves of the necessity, in Plotinus' metaphysics, of the foundational Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect, whereby the product must be ontologically inferior to the producer, and hence essentially open to varying degrees of affection depending on its standing in the hypostatic hierarchy. For the Principle to produce something *not* inferior to itself would mean to produce another Principle, which, as we saw in Chapter 1, is impossible. Secondly, and no less importantly, we ought to emphasize the metaphorical character of the illustration. In fact, no illustration, precisely qua illustration, will do full justice to that which it is supposed to illustrate. This is true of the One to a particularly heightened degree. As it was implied in my discussion on the ineffability of the One in the first chapter, in the end all attempts at grasping the One cognitively or theoretically, whether in noetic or dianoetic fashion, are bound to fail because for Plotinus the nature of the One is afforded only in the experience of union (cf. VI.7 [38] 36). And as we shall see more directly in the final chapter, the fundamental feature of this experience is not cognition but love.

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[46] It is in connection with the metaphor of the circle that Plotinus calls what derives from the center of the circle "centri-form" (κεντροειδής: VI.8 [39] 18.10), and what is akin to the sun, "sunlike" (ἡλιοειδής: I.6 [1] 9.31; cf. Plato, *Republic* VI.508b3, 509a1).

[47] Pigler (2004, 77). For useful remarks on Plotinus' "centrology," see Meijer (1992, 242–245).

[48] Cf. Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* VII.617.5–8.

3 On the Necessity of the One as both the Principle and the End of All Reality

Before I turn to the path or process by which the soul may reach the final goal of its connatural *eros*, I would like to spend a few words on an issue at which I have hinted a number of times in the course of my discussion, namely, the notion of necessity as it applies to the existence of the One and the derivation of all reality from it. In particular, I will try to shed some light on the claim that everything derives of necessity from the One as both the single source and the ultimate desideratum of all reality, or as Principle and End.

Plotinus repeats often that what in Part 1 of this study I have described as the process of derivation of reality from one single source, the One, occurs of necessity, and that the One itself is necessary.[49] There is hardly any doubt that

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[49] I limit my references to the passages on the Principle of Double Activity cited in Chapter 1 note 58; in parenthesis I provide the terms used by Plotinus to indicate necessity, whether expressly (e.g., as with ἔδει) or otherwise (e.g., as with πάντα and ἕκαστον—terms indicating universality, from which I assume that necessity may be easily inferred): II.9 [33] 8.22–23 (line 23: Ἔδει; cf. also Ἀναγκαῖον at line 20, and ἀνάγκη at line 27), III.2 [47] 4.13–16 (line 13: Ἔδει), III.5 [50] 3.3–5 (cf. line 2: οὐ προσήκει), IV.3 [27] 10.31–41 (lines 34–35: κοινὸν δὴ τοῦτο παντὶ τῷ ὄντι), IV.5 [29] 6.23–31 (line 30: τί ἂν κωλύοι), 7.13–20 (line 17: ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων), IV.8 [6] 6.6–15 (line 6: ἔδει; lines 7–8: ἑκάστῃ φύσει τοῦτο ἔνεστι; line 12: οὐκ ἔδει; line 14: τὰ πάντα, πάντα), V.1 [10] 6.25–39 (line 25: Δεῖ οὖν; lines 30–31: πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ἀναγκαίαν; line 38: πάντα; cf. also οὖν χρὴ at line 39, πᾶν at line 50, and ἐξ ἀνάγκης at line 52), V.2 [11]

Plotinus was convinced of the existence of the One, owing to at least two factors: his direct personal experience (attested by Porphyry at VP 23.15–18) and the arguments he inherited and developed at length in his lectures and through the *Enneads* (partly also to lend rational support to that experience). Let us begin with Plotinus' personal experience by observing that even if we concede that such an experience did occur, to cite it (and it alone) as hard evidence for the existence of the One and the derivation of all reality from it would be problematic in at least two respects. First, given the non-discursive and supra-noetic nature of that experience (which I will discuss in the final chapter under the heading of union), the descriptive and thematizing means by which we try to communicate this experience to others, most notably the ones who did not have a share in it, are likely bound to distort its nature in one way or another. Secondly, and along the same lines, since this experience takes place at a level which may be called extra-ordinary, its occurrence cannot be made widely available in the manner of a publicly verifiable ordinary fact. Therefore, short of the conviction one might wish to draw from direct experience, what we are left with to tackle the issue are the rational arguments Plotinus himself provides. What reasons, then, does Plotinus give to speak of necessity at all in reference to the process of derivation and, ultimately, with regard to the One?

We may begin by trying to clarify what Plotinus means by "necessity" in this context. I believe that the kind of necessity he has in mind can be understood as (if not reduced to) an explanatory one, that is, a necessity required by human reason understood in the Kantian sense of a regulative aspiration to form a complete system of principles, thus ideally aiming at justifiably positing the unconditioned ground of all conditions.[50] What I mean by this is that if we

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1 (the whole passage, much like V.1 [10] 6, seems to be cast in the form of an argument, whose unfolding is marked by terms indicating consequentiality: e.g., ὅτι, διὰ τοῦτο, and ἵνα at lines 5–6; γὰρ at lines 7 and 17; οὖν at lines 12 and14; διὸ at line 22), V.3 [49] 7.19–25 (line 21: Ἔδει γὰρ), V.4 [7] 2.26–37 (lines 28–29: ἑκάστου and ἕκαστον; line 29: ἐξ ἀνάγκης; line 33: πολὺ), VI.8 [39] 18.46–52 (in this passage, the One itself is described as what it is and what it ought to be—τὸ δέον—willing what ought to be).

[50] See in particular Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A298/B355–A302–B359. Kant writes: "the proper principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed (*Critique of Pure Reason* A307/B364: "der eigentümliche Grundsatz der Vernunft überhaupt (im logischen Gebrauche) sei: zu dem bedingte Erkenntnisse des Verstandes das Unbedingte zu finden, womit die Einheit desselben vollendet wird." Cf. also Bxx, A642/B670–A668/B696). In a more general sense, for Kant "reason is the faculty that provides the principles of cognition *a priori*" (*Critique of Pure reason* A11/B24: "ist Vernunft das Vermögen, welches die Prinzipien der Erkenntnis a priori an die Hand gibt"). Kant's German text is Kant (1900–1910); translation of passages from the first *Critique* are from Kant (1999).

wish, not to take (or, for that matter, dismiss) at face value, but to explain or justify the relative unities which we ordinarily experience in reality (e.g., *one* rock, *one* tree, *one* fish, *one* human being, *one* table, *one* molecule, etc.), on the basis of the Principle of Prior Simplicity eventually we will have to posit a primordial level of unqualified unity (or several subordinate levels of increasing unity, until such a level is reached) which will account for the plurality of qualified unities we ordinarily experience. It may be worth restating that I have no doubts concerning Plotinus' firm conviction about the existence of the One and the derivation of all reality from it; if nothing else, his personal experience testified to that for him. Surely, one can still wonder whether the explanatory character of the necessity of the Principle contributed to form his conviction and was conducive to his experience. But the fact remains that *reason itself* demands an explanation: to give up all desire for explanation is, in a sense, to give up reason. Plotinus' solution can be read as an attempt at such an explanation, whatever one may think of it.

The acknowledgment of reason's demand for a level of unqualified unity (presumably preceded in the order of explanation by other intermediate levels of increasing unity), which would ground the ordinary experience of unity, is not meant to imply that this level should itself become an object of ordinary experience, not only because what reason requires is a system of principles (rather than of objects of ordinary experience), but more fundamentally because ordinary experience is always an experience of unity in multiplicity, not of unqualified unity. Thus, according to Plotinus it is not this level of unqualified unity that should become available in terms of our ordinary experience of unity, but quite the opposite: the ordinary experiences of unity remain inexplicable without that primordial level of unqualified unity. Moreover, in order to come in contact with this primordial level *of itself* (i.e., alone, or, as the author of the *Enneads* would put it, μόνος πρὸς μόνον: VI.9 [9] 11.51; cf. also I.6 [1] 7.9, V.1 [10] 6.11, VI.7 [38] 34.7–8), ordinary experience ought to be transcended, if possible,[51] or else redescribed (although a merely redescriptive exercise may sometimes turn into a vapid quibble about terms). In the event that this transcending step is impossible (or, alternately, while it has not yet been taken), if we are to provide reasons for the possibility of the qualified unities that we come in contact with in ordinary experience, I take it that for Plotinus the positing of a level of unqualified unity is explanatorily necessary, although it never becomes of itself an object of ordinary experience.

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[51] I try to account for this transcending of ordinary experience in my description of the last step of the ascent—union—in Chapter 6.

The same reasoning applies to the identification of the One as the Principle of all things with the One as the Good: the End of all things or universal final cause. Or rather, the same reasoning applies to the very phenomenon of desire. First, if desire is not to be considered pointless, it must aim at something which is not desired in view of something else, but purely for its own sake: a version of the Aristotelian ἀνάγκη στῆναι (*Metaphysics* xii.3.1070a4) from the perspective of the desirer, implicitly endorsed by Plotinus. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly for the present argument, the Plotinian addition to Aristotle's point from *Nicomachean Ethics* i.2.1094a18–22, discussed in the previous section: if desire is not to be left unexplained, its aim, though conceptually distinct from its origin, is *of necessity* identical with it in being. However, the kind of necessity at work both in this identification and in the positing of a truly final desideratum can be understood, once again, as primarily explanatory. In other words, the One, conceived of as both the Principle of all things and the End of all things, never becomes an object of ordinary experience(while the personal experience of union is not of itself probative in this regard), but is posited of necessity for explanatory reasons.

As I have indicated, the perspective from which I suggest we approach the question of the necessity of one single source of all reality, the universal efficient cause which in Plotinus' metaphysics, likewise necessarily, coincides with the universal final cause, does not differ altogether from Kant's. More precisely, what I have in mind is Kant's treatment of the (cosmological) antinomies of pure reason, particularly the fourth (the dynamical antinomy of modality), concerning the idea of a necessary being either within the world[52] or transcending the world as its cause.[53] As Kant puts it: "Thesis: To the world there belongs something that, either as a part of it or as its cause, is an absolutely necessary being. […] Antithesis: There is no absolutely necessary being existing anywhere, either in the world or outside the world as its cause."[54] This necessary being is identical with God, the third, or theological, idea: the Ideal of pure reason.[55] Kant points out that within the antinomies the position he calls the thesis (i.e., in the fourth antinomy, that there is such a necessary being) has the advantage of popularity.[56] Whether this is still the case today, in philosophy popularity (or lack thereof) is of no consequence to what the truth of the matter might be. Kant knows this, and yet he explicitly recognizes what I called the primarily explanatory necessity of the unqualified level of unity (in Kantian jargon, the absolutely unconditioned), both in principle and for pragmatic reasons. In principle: "*If the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of conditions, and hence the absolutely unconditioned, is also given*."[57] Pragmatically: "The presupposition of a supreme intelligence, as the sole cause of the world-whole, but of course merely in the idea, can therefore always be useful to reason and never harmful to it."[58] Surely enough, the modes of givenness of the conditioned and of the unconditioned (not to mention the respective conceptualizations of the Kantian unconditioned—God—and the Plotinian unconditioned—the One) differ, as Kant himself explicitly observes:[59] the former is "phenomenal," or given in experience (*Erfahrung*) according to space, time, and the categories; the latter, by contrast, is a merely regulative idea of reason, and as such is never met within experience.

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[52] Obviously, neither Plotinus' view (see vi.9 [9] 6.55 and Chapter 1 note 10) nor Kant's (see *Critique of Pure Reason* A617/B645).

[53] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A452/B480–A460/B488, A559/B587–A565/B593; cf. *Prolegomena* iv, 338–339, 347.

[54] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A452/B480, A453/B481: "Thesis: Zu der Welt gehört etwas, das, entweder als ihr Teil, oder ihre Ursache, ein schlechthin notwendiges Wesen ist. […] Antithesis: Es existiert überall kein schlechthin notwendiges Wesen, weder in der Welt, noch außer der Welt, als ihre Ursache." Obviously Kant would reject the view of someone dogmatically espousing either the thesis or the antithesis (i.e., according to Kant, respectively Plato and Epicurus: see *Critique of Pure Reason* A471/B499–500), since these are never available theoretically to rational sensible beings.

[55] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A571/B599–A583/B611; cf. *Prolegomena* iv, 348.

Are there alternatives to recognizing this explanatory kind of necessity, which is naturally invoked by reason in dealing with the qualified unities encountered in ordinary experience (or, in Kantian language, with the conditional character of phenomena)? So far as I can tell, there are two such alternatives, neither of which, however, I find viable: positive dogmatism, of which fideism is a militant form, and dogmatic skepticism, whose extreme practical form is universal relativism (these labels are mine, not Kant's nor Plotinus'). Positive dogmatism, instead of recognizing the primarily explanatory character of the necessity at work in the ordinary experience of unity, speaks apodictically of necessity *tout court*, though unable to provide indubitable justification for its claim. Dogmatic skepticism, by contrast, apodictically *assumes* that all "experience" ought to be ordinary, thus leaving the qualified kind of unities encountered in ordinary experience unexplained, and thereby misrecognizing, also without indubitable justification, the very idea of an explanatory kind of necessity (and thus of reason itself).

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[56] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A467/B495.

[57] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A409/B436: "*wenn das Bedingte gegeben ist, so ist aus die ganze Summe der Bedingungen, mithin das schlechthin Unbedingte gegeben*" (emphasis by Kant).

[58] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A687/B715: "Die Voraussetzung einer obersten Intelligenz, als der alleinigen Ursache des Weltganzen, aber freilich bloβ in der Idee, kann also jederzeit der Vernunft nutzen und dabei doch niemals schaden" (cf. also A697/B725–A698/B726).

[59] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A409/B436; cf. also A670/B698.

It should be evident that insofar as Plotinus accepts to discuss rationally the "entities" which he finds (explanatorily) necessary, he does not belong to the first branch of the alternative, positive dogmatism. Moreover, Plotinus maintains that in order to experience unification with the Principle one must have gone through a considerable process of purification, without which this experience is not possible, as we shall see in the last chapter. From this perspective, the very explanatory necessity of the One may become truly evident only to those who have completed this process. In this sense, too, Plotinus does not fall under the heading of positive dogmatism.

As for the second alternative, dogmatic skepticism, if there is no necessity that the one single source of all reality should "appear," that is, display itself phenomenally, then neither is it necessary to be dogmatically skeptic. As I already pointed out, for Plotinus the necessity is rather reversed, since what appears, or what we experience ordinarily, is always a relative unity (i.e., a unity in multiplicity whose explanation is given in the Principle of Prior Simplicity), while the unity pertaining to the One is absolute, hence never given *as such* in ordinary experience. Moreover, the Kantian object of sensible experience, the phenomenon, is subject to spatio-temporal conditions. If the One were to display itself by itself phenomenally, it could not be the remote origin of time: it would not be the One.

CHAPTER 5

The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent

Prolegomena to the Journey

In the *Enneads*, the One is primarily conceptualized as the Good, the truly final end of all love or desire. But if, as I argued, for Plotinus the One is not only the ultimate object (the End or universal final cause) of the love he observes in derived reality, but also at the same time the primordial giver (the Principle or universal efficient cause) of that same love, we will soon recognize that the soul's possibility of being united with it in love is an essential feature of his metaphysics. Put differently, if what the One gives to what is derived from it is love for the One as other than the lover, it follows that the possibility of a journey of return to it, commensurate to the capacities of the recipient of its love, is already inscribed in the very nature of the gift. Therefore, love for the One—*eros*—is a gift, not in the sense that it is something superimposed on the being of what derives from it, but in the sense that for all derived reality in a general way, and for the individual soul in particular, to be or to exist means to be the bearer of this love for the Good. More importantly, the content of this gift is at the same time the promise and possibility of its own fulfillment in the form of a journey of return to the One: the ascent.

A broad framework for the investigation of this journey of return was laid out in the previous two chapters as I provided an account of the nature and variety of *eros*, and of the One as the truly final goal of the soul's inborn love. The purpose of this and the next chapter is to examine the ascent in its fundamental features, terminology, conditions, and stages, that is, the path which the soul is to take in order to reach the goal indicated by its connatural *eros*. My overarching thesis is that the ascending movement toward the One has love as its origin, as its guiding force, as well as its culmination, and that for the individual soul to ascend means precisely to grow in erotic proximity to the Principle whence it derives its existence and love.

1 Preconditions of the Ascent: Attunement and Affinity with the Beloved

There are two major factors that make the ascent possible, what we might call its fundamental preconditions. The first factor, which I briefly introduced in

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the opening pages of Section 1 of Chapter 4, is that the individual soul must attune itself to the beloved, or adopt a certain disposition in order to be able to love its desideratum, the One conceived as the Good, in a way that is suitable to its status of supremely loved (ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15) or universal final cause. It follows that the soul must be of a certain nature, such that the very possibility of the ascent as self-transformation or attunement to the beloved is essentially open for it. This openness or possibility is the second precondition of the ascent, a precondition to which I will refer as the essential affinity of the soul with the higher hypostases or, in the language of love, the affinity between lover and beloved.

1.1 *First Precondition of the Ascent: Attunement, or the Infinite Love by Which the Soul Is to Love the One Qua Good*

In the context of the ascent, I am going to refer to the soul's necessity to attune itself to its ultimate beloved (i.e., the One qua Good or universal final cause) as the Principle of Assimilation.[1] The main Platonic claims that are likely at the basis of this principle are found in *Theaetetus* 176a5–c5 and at *Republic* X.613a7–b1.[2] The decisive lines of the first passage, *Theaetetus* 176a8–b3, b8–c3 read (my translation):[3]

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[1] Cf. Darras-Worm (2007, 238); Igal (1982–1998, I, 98) calls this principle "principio de la adecuación de la potencia con el objeto." The most common Greek terms which Plotinus uses to denote likeness or similarity include: ὅμοιος, ὁμοειδής, ὁμοιόω, ὁμοιότης, and finally ὁμοίωσις, the particular term that I translate with "assimilation." Here is a list of the occurrences of these terms in the *Enneads* when used to indicate likeness to higher realities broadly in the context of the ascent to the One: for ὅμοιος see I.6 [1] 9.29, VI.9 [9] 11.32; for ὁμοειδής see IV.3 [27] 4.30, V.1 [10] 2.44; for ὁμοιόω see I.2 [19] (the verb alone is used some 22 times in this treatise, most notably 13 times in chapter 1, and 7 times in chapter 2), I.4 [46] 16.12, I.6 [1] 6.20, 7.28, I.7 [54] 1.12, I.8 [51] 8.43, V.3 [49] 8.24, 55; for ὁμοιότης see I.6 [1] 2.11–12, IV.7 [2] 10.40, V.3 [49] 8.56, VI.7 [38] 31.12–13, 34.11, VI.9 [9] 4.27, 8.28; for ὁμοίωσις see I.2 [19] 1.26, 3.1–11 and 20, 5.2, 6.26, 7.27. Another cluster of words indicating kinship, affinity, appropriation, or adaptation conveys the notion of assimilation in the *Enneads* (and in the broad Neoplatonic tradition) and includes: οἰκεῖος (III.8 [30] 6.21, 8.3, IV.7 [2] 10.13, V.5 [32] 7.24, V.6 [24] 4.17, V.9 [5] 1.20), οἰκειόω (III.8 [30] 6.18, 22), οἰκείωσις (used negatively at III.6 [26] 13.27); see also συγγενής (I.2 [19] 4.14, I.6 [1] 6.15, 9.29, VI.9 [9] 4.28, 8.29). See relevant entries in Sleeman and Pollet (1980).

[2] Other passages from Plato's dialogues include *Laws* IV.716c1–d4, *Phaedo* 66b1–67b5, 83e5–84b8, *Phaedrus* 252e7–b1, *Timaeus* 90d1–7, and the likely spurious *Minos* 319a3–5.

[3] Plato, *Theaetetus* 176a8–b3, b8–c3 reads: διὸ καὶ πειρᾶσθαι χρὴ ἐνθένδε [b1] ἐκεῖσε φεύγειν ὅτι τάχιστα. φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ [b2] τὸ δυνατόν· ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως [b3] γενέσθαι. [...] [b8] θεὸς οὐδαμῇ [c1] οὐδαμῶς ἄδικος, ἀλλ' ὡς οἷόν τε δικαιότατος, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν [c2] αὐτῷ ὁμοιότερον οὐδὲν ἢ ὃς ἂν ἡμῶν αὖ γένηται ὅτι δικαιό- [c3] τατος.

> For this reason one should escape as soon as possible from here to get there. Escape is to resemble a god as much as possible; and resemblance is to become just and pious with wisdom. […] God is nowhere and in no way unjust, but is most just, and there is nothing more similar to him than the one of us who in turn has become as just as possible.

And at *Republic* X.613a7–b1 we read:[4] "The gods do not fail to care for the one who eagerly desires to become just and, by practicing virtue, to resemble a god as much as it is possible for a human being" (my translation).

Although Plotinus does not use the expression "Principle of Assimilation," he does state the principle in concise, if not immediately transparent, fashion at I.6 [1] 9.29–30: "For one must come to the sight with a seeing power made akin and like to what is seen" (see note 6 below for the Greek text). The field from which Plotinus interpretively borrows this principle (or to which he applies it in this passage) is that of sense perception (cf. IV.4 [28] 23.19–35, VI.7 [38] 31.8–11), and his likely source is Plato's theory of vision in the *Timaeus* (see particularly 45b4–d7 and 47b5–c4; cf. Aristotle, *De anima* I.2.404b17–18, II.5.416b35).[5] The larger text from which I derived the principle is one of the *Enneads*' most read and anthologized treatises, I.6 [1] *On beauty*. This treatise may be summarily described as an ascent of the soul to the Good through an investigation of the experience of beauty. The Principle of Assimilation is stated as a necessity to which the soul must submit if it is to meet its desired terminus at the end of the ascent. Here is the longer passage from which I derived this principle, I.6 [1] 9.24–34:[6]

> …this alone is the eye that sees the great Beauty. But if anyone comes to the sight blear-eyed with wickedness, and unpurified, or weak and by cowardice unable to look at what is very bright, he sees nothing, even if someone shows him what is there and possible to see. For one must come to the sight with a seeing power made akin and like to what is seen. No

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[4] Plato, *Republic* X.613a7–b1: οὐ γὰρ δὴ ὑπό γε θεῶν ποτε ἀμελεῖται [a8] ὃς ἂν προθυμεῖσθαι ἐθέλῃ δίκαιος γίγνεσθαι καὶ ἐπιτηδεύων [b1] ἀρετὴν εἰς ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ.

[5] Cf. Darras-Worms (2007, 237–238).

[6] I.6 [1] 9.24–34: οὗτος [25] γὰρ μόνος ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τὸ μέγα κάλλος βλέπει. Ἐὰν δὲ ἴῃ [26] ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν λημῶν κακίαις καὶ οὐ κεκαθαρμένος ἢ [27] ἀσθενής, ἀνανδρίᾳ οὐ δυνάμενος τὰ πάνυ λαμπρὰ βλέπειν, [28] οὐδὲν βλέπει κἂν ἄλλος δεικνύῃ παρὸν τὸ ὁραθῆναι [29] δυνάμενον. Τὸ γὰρ ὁρῶν πρὸς τὸ ὁρώμενον συγγενὲς καὶ ὅμοιον [30] ποιησάμενον δεῖ ἐπιβάλλειν τῇ θέᾳ. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν πώποτε [31] εἶδεν ὀφθαλμὸς ἥλιον ἡλιοειδὴς μὴ γεγενημένος, οὐδὲ τὸ [32] καλὸν ἂν ἴδοι ψυχὴ μὴ καλὴ γενομένη. Γενέσθω δὴ [33] πρῶτον θεοειδὴς πᾶς καὶ καλὸς πᾶς, εἰ μέλλει θεάσασθαι θεόν [34] τε καὶ καλόν. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, minimally modified.

> eye ever saw the sun without becoming sun-like, nor can a soul see Beauty without becoming beautiful. You must become first all godlike and all beautiful if you intend to see God and Beauty.

Notice that while Plotinus explicitly employs what I here called the Principle of Assimilation in the context of the ascent, the formal structure of the principle is not exclusive to Plotinus, nor, for that matter, is its application limited to the ascent.[7] Most notably, the principle can be found to apply also to the Aristotelian approach to the First Mover, which, as we have seen, moves by being loved (ὡς ἐρώμενον: *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072b3). Accordingly, the kind of individual soul that can come lovingly to contemplate the divine Mover of *Metaphysics* XII, which I take to be identical with the highest object of contemplation (θεωρία) described in chapters 6–8 of the last book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is a rational one. Non-rational souls, and even rational souls that fail to actualize their rational power (διανοητικόν, which for Aristotle seems most of all to be a human being's true self: *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.4.1166a16–17, 8.1168b34–35, X.7.1178a2–3), are incapable of contemplation. This is because non-rational souls and souls which do not make an effort to become attuned to such an object will inevitably fail to contemplate it. From this perspective, the whole of the *Nicomachean Ethics* could be read as a journey of purification leading to happiness primarily conceived of as the contemplation of the object which in Aristotle's view is most worth contemplating.

Now, since this object for Aristotle is thought thinking itself (νοήσεως νόησις: *Metaphysics* XII.9.1074b34–35), Aristotelian happiness will be essentially noetic in nature. But for Plotinus happiness as intellectual activity or, more precisely, as reintegration in the noetic realm (see Section 2 of Chapter 6), cannot be the final goal of the individual soul because the One, rather than thinking, is "beloved and love and love of itself" (VI.8 [39] 15.1). It follows that if the soul wishes to attune itself to the One, it is not sufficient for it to reach the level of Intellect, but it must become love, and love of an infinite kind, since the object itself is both infinite love and infinitely lovable. Earlier in Chapter 4, we have already read the text where Plotinus conveys this idea, VI.7 [38] 32.24–29 (for the Greek text, see Chapter 4 note 4):[8]

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[7] Antecedents of this principle may be found in the Presocratics (e.g., Empedocles, DK 31.B109; Philolaus, DK 44.A29; Democritus, DK 68.B164), Plato (see references in notes 2–4 above; cf. also *Republic* VI.508b12–13, VII.516a5–b2, 518a1–b1), Aristotle (*De anima* I.2.404b17–18 and II.5.416b35, as already noted, and*Nicomachean Ethics* I.3.1094b11–14, 23–27), Philo (*De specialibus legibus* IV.36.188, *De virtutibus* 31.168), Alcinous (*Didaskalikos* XXVIII, XXVII.180.1–16), and others.

[8] ARMSTRONG's translation, minimally modified (my emphasis). From the standpoint of the history of philosophy, the relevance of the idea conveyed by this text may be appreciated

> Truly, when you cannot grasp the form or shape of what is longed for, it would be *most longed for* and *most loved*, and love for it would be *immeasurable*. For love is *not limited* here, because neither is the beloved, but the love of this would be *unbounded*…

Moreover, as I just hinted above, it would seem that for Aristotle non-rational beings are cut off from enjoying the contemplation of the First Mover, since its intellectual nature renders it unavailable to things that do not have a share in the same nature. The situation is different in the case of Plotinus' contemplation of the One, for what is required, minimally but also most fundamentally, in order to have some access to the One is a bare and most basic desire of the Principle as that which bestows on each thing its unity (which here is identical with the thing's being and distinctive *eros*). But since the Source is, negatively, other than Intellect and, positively, both love and that which is most loved, it will not in principle be closed off to the love directed to it from non-rational beings; instead, it will allow to be partially approached in love also by beings that have no active share in intellection.

Two critical observations on the idea of assimilation or attunement are in place before I turn to the second precondition of the ascent. The first observation concerns the relation of love and knowledge (or intellection) as the soul becomes attuned to the One as universal final cause. I would like to emphasize that here it is not a matter of radically contrasting knowledge and love, as if the presence of the one would in principle imply the absence of the other, and vice versa—a view which can hardly be attributed to Plotinus, I maintain. On the contrary, it is simply a question of understanding knowledge, both in its discursive and in its noetic form, as insufficient to relate to the One *correspondingly*, or as the specific "nature" of the desideratum requires. Thus, in the journey of return to the One, the ascent, it is indeed necessary that the soul come cognitively to discover the One as both the Principle and the End; but the cognitive

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if one allows it to be considered a distant relative of the view developed in later centuries, particularly in the Middle Ages, according to which the human soul is "capax infiniti" (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* II.d34.q1.a5.arg2), or "capax Dei" (e.g., Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIV.8.11: "capax eius" [i.e., "Dei"]; see also XIII.8.11; XIV.4.6: "summae naturae capax"; XIV.12.15; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III.q4.a1.ad2; *De veritate* q22.a2.ad5). The important difference between Plotinus and these authors is that for the latter, due to the debilitating effects of the Fall, divine grace is needed as a gratuitous power supplementing human nature in order to restore that capacity in the human being (e.g., Augustine, *Confessions* VII.20.26, *De Trinitate* XV.8.14, *De civitate Dei* X.9, XXII.22; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II.q109.a7). For Plotinus, by contrast, the soul's efforts suffice, as I argue at the end of Section 3 of this chapter.

discovery, no matter how important, by itself is strictly insufficient. What really matters is that with this discovery the soul becomes willing to be transformed through a process of attunement to that which it came to discover as its proper desideratum. If this attunement does not occur, all knowledge remains vain. We should therefore admit that knowledge is a crucial aspect or even a necessary condition of love, in the sense that it would be hard to imagine a love that knows (or even merely divines, if only metaphorically, as in the case of a plant or a rock) absolutely nothing about its beloved. At the same time, we ought to recognize that knowledge is neither the whole of love nor the most important aspect of it. According to Plotinus, through reasoning (λόγος) it is possible to make this love explicit (cf. VI.7 [38] 33.11–13), but this operation brings the nature of love into focus without actually replacing love as the proper attitude to relate correspondingly to the One. Thus, for Plotinus knowledge is an essential element in the process of shedding light on the nature of love, but it is not a substitute for love, nor an overcoming of love, whose priority over knowledge never seems to be put into question.

In order to grasp the nature of this priority in the context of the ascent, one need only think of how utterly pointless knowledge would be in the soul's journey to the One if love were ever to be missing, and of how superfluous knowledge becomes once the soul has managed to reach the end of the return journey and to love the One correspondingly. In fact, one may very well doubt whether intellectual activity is desirable at all by itself, even before one has reached the end of the ascent, without a desire for the truths grasped in it and the joy connected to their attainment.[9] Of course, this love and joy may be understood as essentially belonging to the true intellectual activity proper to Intellect, as we saw in my remarks on pleasure in Chapter 4; but this would simply mean that intellectual activity already entails an affective element which ordinarily does not seem to be associated with it.

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[9] Damascius (*Lectures on Plato's Philebus* 86–88, commenting on Plato's *Philebus* 21d6–e4) makes a similar point and is worth citing at some length: "The cognitive function [γνωριστικὴ ἰδιότης] is not desirable [αἱρετόν] either, because it does not excite appetition [ὀρεκτόν], nor can a thing bring enjoyment [εὐφρόσυνον] if it does not excite appetition; for cognition [γνῶσις] does not apprehend existents as objects of appetition, but of cognition. [...] So there will not even be love [ἔρως] of knowledge, if isolated, and consequently no pursuit of it; for only when we long to possess a thing do we exert ourselves for it. [87] The isolation of intelligence [νοῦ] is forced and impossible, even more so than in the case of pleasure, for love of truth [τῆς ἀληθείας ἔρως] is a strong emotion, and so is the joy [εὐπάθεια] of attaining it. [...] [88] A man cannot really be good without taking pleasure [ἡδόμενος] in good actions, nor just without taking pleasure in justice, as Aristotle says [*Nicomachean Ethics* I.9.1099a17–20]; and therefore not contemplative either, he might have added, [without taking pleasure in contemplation <θεωρίᾳ>]." See Westerink's notes *ad loc.* for some comments and references to some of the sources of this text (Westerink 1959).

In addition to this, love has priority over knowledge also in the sense that without it knowledge itself remains impeded. Consider the ordinary inability of someone whose love is not purified to think of the ascent as something other than fancy. What I have in mind is not the case of the love of plants and lower animals, whose natural orientation toward the Good remains unreflectively obscure; here the very knowledge (whether noetic or dianoetic) of what is truly worth loving seems to be naturally impossible, or else to be found in a murky state of potentiality. What I am referring to is rather the condition of unpurified individual souls, in which the connatural *eros* directing them toward the Good is resisted due to their attachment to lower or apparent goods. In this case a proper knowledge of what is truly worth loving remains hindered, and the soul cannot quite understand (or cannot help misunderstanding) what is missing in the goods it is after. Plotinus seems to go as far as to say that a full grasp of love's nature is given only to those who have had an actual experience of the Good, as when at I.6 [1] 7.2–3 he writes: "Anyone who has seen it [viz., the Good] knows what I mean when I say that it is beautiful"[10] (cf. also I.6 [1] 4.4–12, VI.7 [38] 40.1–2, VI.9 [9] 4.15–35). In the present context this means: only the one who has experienced the beauty of the Good in love can understand. Thus, for Plotinus love is not only prior to knowledge in the sense that in union, knowledge is superseded while love remains, but also in the sense that knowledge is possible at all only on the basis of the experience of love. Further still, this priority does not imply that love makes knowledge possible as a means to an end. On the contrary, love is both the ground of knowledge and the end of knowledge: I can know something about the One because I first love it, and I know what I know about it in order to love it better. In other words, if the One is known at all, it is known only because it is loved and in order to be loved further.

Thus, it seems fair to say that for Plotinus love is the proper attitude that any given being ought to assume in order to draw near to the One. However, although non-rational beings can indeed love the One, they remain incapable of loving it *correspondingly*, that is, of loving it with an infinite kind of love eventually leading to union. But then in what sense is the One the highest desideratum or universal final cause if, after all, only that which has a share in rationality possesses the ability to desire it and love it correspondingly? Briefly, in the sense that even those beings which are not endowed with reason, whether permanently or insofar as reason in them remains inactive, need the One in order to exist and depend on it for their subsistence. Therefore, even these beings desire the One in some way and can relate to it in love according to their capabilities.

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[10] I.6 [1] 7.2–3: Εἴ τις οὖν εἶδεν αὐτό, οἶδεν ὃ λέγω, ὅπως [3] καλόν. Compare VI.9 [9] 9.46–47: Ὅστις δὲ εἶδεν, οἶδεν [47] ὃ λέγω… Cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* I.37.4. As ARMSTRONG points out in a note to a parallel passage, VI.9 [9] 9.46–47, the phrase was probably used "by a mystery-initiate when addressing others to avoid divulging secrets" (ARMSTRONG VII, 338 note 1).

In light of these remarks, I suggest that in Plotinus the superlatives ἐρασμιώτατον used to refer to the One at VI.7 [38] 32.25 (also ποθεινότατον on the same line) and 33.14 and ἀγαπητότατον at VI.8 [39] 16.15 should be understood both extensively and intensively: extensively, in the sense that the One is the universal final cause, truly the beloved of *all* beings, and desired insofar as these beings would cease to exist if they completely lacked this desire; intensively, in the sense that only the One can be loved with an infinite love, although not all beings seem to be capable of so loving it. I will return to this point in the next section.

My second observation concerns the formless nature of the One. Formlessness applies to the One as the Principle of all things in the perspective of derivation as much as it does to the One as the End of all things in the perspective of the ascent. An argument supporting this conclusion can be found in chapters 32–33 of treatise VI.7 [38] *How the multitude of the Forms came into being, and on the Good*. In Chapter 2 we saw that for Plotinus the One, if it is to be the Principle of all, ought to be formless. He grounds this conclusion in the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect. More in detail, since one of the universal features of derived reality is form (with the exceptions of both intelligible and lower matter, which however can become form and reflect form respectively), since form is a determination or limitation of any given thing, and since the One is both infinite power and gives what it does not have (the Principle of Henologic Giving), the One itself must be formless (cf. VI.7 [38] 32.4–24). The formlessness of the One can be explained in terms of hypostatic generation: it is the simple infinite, the boundless power from which Intellect emerges, first as intelligible matter and then—logically rather than chronologically—as the realm of the unified totality of Forms. But unlike the formlessness of lower matter, the formlessness of the Principle is one that imparts form, proximately on intelligible matter (cf. II.4 [12] 5.31–34, V.1 [10] 7.13–14) and remotely on all reality, while itself remaining beyond form (cf. VI.7 [38] 17.14–16). In the language of "measure" (μέτρον), which Plotinus borrows from Plato (e.g., *Philebus* 64d9–e7, 66a4–8),[11] the One is the measuring measure, that is, that measure which itself is not measured by another measure. Thus, at V.5 [32] 4.13–14 we read that the One is "measure, and not that which is measured" (μέτρον γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ οὐ μετρούμενον); at I.8 [51] 2.5, that it is the "measure and limit of all things" (μέτρον πάντων καὶ πέρας); at lastly, VI.8 [39] 18.3, that it is the "encompassment and measure of all things" (περίληψις πάντων καὶ μέτρον). Significantly, at I.6 [1] 9.21 we are told that once the soul has been purified and has developed the power of inner sight through which it sees the absolute Beauty of the Good, it is "everywhere unmeasured" (ἀμέτρητον πανταχοῦ).

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[11] On the association of the Good with measure see Plato, *Statesman* 284a1–285c3, *Protagoras* 356c4–357e8, *Laws* IV.716c1–d4; cf. Aristotle, *Politicus* fr. 2 = Syrianus, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 168.33–35.

The formlessness of the Principle can be explained in a similar way from the opposite end of the spectrum, that is, from the standpoint of the One conceived of as the universal final cause. The passage containing the second occurrence of the superlative ἐρασμιώτατον, VI.7 [38] 33.7–16, aptly illustrates this point:[12]

> When the Intellect thinks one particular thing, it is diminished, as it is also even if it takes together all things that are in the intelligible realm; if it thinks an individual thing, it has one intelligible form; if it thinks all together, it has a kind of variegated form, still in need: it must contemplate that which is beyond the all-beautiful both variegated and not variegated;[13] that which the soul desires without saying why it longs for something like this, but our reasoning says that this is the real thing, since the nature of the best and the nature of the most lovable is in the altogether formless. Therefore, whatever you bring into form and show to the soul, this seeks something else over it which gave it form.

In the broader context of this passage (i.e., chapters 32–33 of *Enneads* VI.7 [38]), we see an old Platonic theme resurface: the intrinsic association of the Good and Beauty (see Plato, *Symposium* 201c1–5, 204e1–2; cf. also *Lysis* 216d2, *Meno* 77b6–7, *Timaeus* 87c4–5)[14] as the proper intentional objects of *eros* (see Plato, *Symposium* 204c7–206a13). Plotinus explains this association through a detour into the formless, but in order to understand what he has in mind we must first grasp what he means by the terms "form" (μορφή or εἶδος, here used synonymously: cf. VI.7 [38] 33.30–38) and "Beauty" (κάλλος) in this context. As P. Hadot observes, each of these terms is used in two different senses.[15] (i) Form in the *ordinary sense* is what by being superimposed on matter makes matter beautiful; as such, that which *has* form has it as received from elsewhere. (ii) Form in a *stricter sense*, by contrast, is not what merely *has* form, but that itself which *is* form, namely, Intellect. For this reason Intellect is said to be both formless, in the sense that it does not *have* form as received from something else which *is* form, and form, in the sense that it *is* itself form (see VI.7 [38] 32.35–33.7). The same distinction applies to Beauty, which in the second or stricter acceptation refers not so much to one among the Forms or Ideas, as to the entirety of the noetic realm.

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[12] VI.7 [38] 33.7–16: Ἐπειδὴ ὁ νοῦς [8] ἴδιόν τι νοεῖ, ἠλάττωται, κἂν ὁμοῦ πάντα λάβῃ ὅσα ἐν [9] τῷ νοητῷ· κἂν ἕκαστον, μίαν μορφὴν νοητὴν ἔχει· ὁμοῦ δὲ [10] πάντα οἷον ποικίλην τινά, ἔτι ἐν δεήσει, οἷον δεῖ θεάσασθαι [11] ὃν ὑπὲρ ἐκεῖνο τὸ πάγκαλον καὶ ποικίλον, καὶ οὐ ποικίλον οὗ [12] ὀρέγεται μὲν ψυχὴ οὐ λέγουσα διὰ τί τοιοῦτον ποθεῖ, ὁ δὲ [13] λόγος λέγει, ὅτι τοῦτο τὸ ὄντως, εἴπερ ἐν τῷ πάντη ἀνειδέῳ [14] ἡ τοῦ ἀρίστου φύσις καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἐρασμιωτάτου. Διὸ ὅ τι [15] ἂν εἰς εἶδος ἀνάγων τῇ ψυχῇ δεικνύῃς, ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἄλλο τὸ [16] μορφῶσαν ζητεῖ. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified.

[13] The "all-beautiful both variegated and not variegated" (VI.7 [38] 33.11) is Intellect, in which identity and difference come together (cf. VI.7 [38] 13).

[14] The fusion of the terms "beauty" and "goodness" gives rise to the word καλοκἀγαθία (e.g., Xenophon, *Memorabilia* I.6.14; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.3.1124a4; *Definitions* 412e8, once attributed to Plato). This noun is never found in Plato and occurs only once in

Precisely qua form and Beauty in the second or stricter meaning, the hypostasis Intellect is already a de-limitation of that boundless and formless power from which it springs. But this means that even Intellect is *formed* form, yet not because like everything else it receives form from something else which *is* form, but because it derives it from that which is itself formless; or, in the language of measure (μέτρον) which I indicated above, Intellect owes its measure to a measure beyond measure, or a measure itself unmeasured, namely, the formless One (see VI.7 [38] 33.16–19), which in this very precise sense may be understood also as the remote formal—yet formless—cause of all things (cf. Chapter 1 note 107).[16] As for the One, it is also called Beauty, but in an even more peculiar expression: it is not Beauty, but "Beauty beyond Beauty" (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος: VI.7 [38]

Plotinus (I.1 [53] 12.36), but beauty and goodness are often and variously associated both in Plato (e.g., *Laches* 192c8–9, *Theaetetus* 185e4–5, *Protagoras* 315d8–e1, *Greater Hippias* 297b2–d1, *Republic* III.402a1, IV.425d7, VI.507b5, *Timaeus* 88c6) and in Plotinus (e.g., I.6 [1] 6–7, 9.34–43, V.5 [32] 12, VI.7 [38] 22, and the passage under discussion, chapters 32–33 of the same treatise), although Plotinus draws a sharp line between beauty and goodness, as I pointed out early in Section 2 of Chapter 3.

[15] P. Hadot (1988, 332–336).

[16] As we saw in Chapter 2, Intellect constitutes itself as a full hypostasis in reverting upon itself and toward its generator. By contemplating and trying to replicate the perfect simplicity of the One in itself, Intellect in its incipient state (i.e., Loving Intellect) becomes the hypostasis Intellect proper (i.e., Thinking Intellect). In the context of Plotinus' metaphysics of derivation, the formlessness and the form of Intellect refer precisely to the two states or stages of the second hypostasis: Loving or pre- noetic Intellect (i.e., intelligible matter) and Thinking Intellect respectively. Cf. P. Hadot (1988, 332).

32.29; cf. also 33.11).[17] And since in the Platonic milieu of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* Beauty is presented as the proper intentional object of love, the One conceived as “Beauty beyond Beauty” is the ultimate object of love.[18] For although the soul in love is *initially* attracted by that which is given form (i.e., all beautiful things which, remotely informed by Intellect qua Form and Beauty, *have* form) and *successively* by that itself which *is* form (i.e., Intellect), *ultimately* its connatural *eros* directs it toward that which gives form while itself remaining *beyond* form, the formless One.

Here the formless nature of the One as that which is most lovable also lends itself to be taken as a further reason for the priority of love over knowledge. What has form (or, as I pointed out more precisely, that which *is* form: Intellect) can certainly be known, and perfect knowledge (νόησις) is the proper way of relating to it, in the sense that Intellect itself neither exceeds nor falls short of such knowledge, but is the very coincidence of knower and known object. One may still ask: Can we not love Intellect? That is, can we not relate to it, not only through knowledge, but also through love? We certainly can insofar as Intellect is desirable qua good, or as ἀγαθοειδής. The question, however, is not whether Intellect lends itself to be loved—for it does—but whether, precisely qua Intellect, it suffices to the love that loves it—and this, it does *not*. Stated otherwise, love can be directed to Intellect and find it lovable insofar as Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής; but love will never find Intellect *most* lovable for one simple reason, to wit, because Intellect is identical with the realm of Form, while love is essentially and ultimately directed toward the formless.

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[17] At *Republic* VI.509a6–7, Plato calls the Good “an inconceivable beauty” (ἀμήχανον κάλλος), which provides knowledge and truth while being superior in beauty to both (εἰ ἐπιστήμην μὲν καὶ ἀλήθειαν παρέχει, αὐτὸ δ’ ὑπὲρ ταῦτα κάλλει ἐστίν). It may be on the basis of these references from Plato that Plotinus identifies the Good beyond being of the *Republic* with the Beauty of the *Symposium* (see VI.7 [38] 40.26–28: cf. Plato, *Republic* VI.509b9, *Symposium* 210e4–5, *Philebus* 63b8; see P. Hadot 1988, 187 notes 354–357, and again pages 335–336). According to Stern-Gillet (2000), in *Enneads* VI.7 [38] 32–33 Plotinus identifies the One, the Good, and Beauty.

[18] This understanding of Beauty will receive a more scholastic formulation in post-Plotinian metaphysics, for instance in Iamblichus (*Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, fr. 54.6–7; cf. also fr. 50.20–22) and Proclus (*Elements of Theology* 23–24; cf. also 53), for whom every order of reality is subject to a threefold classification: (i) unparticipated (τὸ ἀμέθεκτον; i.e., in the case of Beauty, the Beauty beyond Beauty or formless Beauty of the One), (ii) participated (τὸ μετεχόμενος; i.e., the Beauty of Intellect, or form, in which all beautiful things share), and (iii) participating (τὸ μετέχον, τὸ κατὰ μέθεξιν; i.e., the beautiful things having a share in the Beauty of Intellect). For some comments on this point see Dillon (1973, 33, 335–336), Wallis (1995, 126–127).

One might insist: Why love the formless? Why does form not suffice to love? Fundamentally, because love of any form, even love of that which *is* Form, is already essentially a limitation of love. P. Hadot aptly remarks:[19]

> C'est parce que le Bien est sans forme, sans mesure, sans limite, que l'amour est lui-même sans mesure et sans limite. L'infinité n'apparaît pas ici comme une imperfection qui résulterait de la passivité, de la privation inhérentes au désir, mais au contraire comme une énergie immense résultant de la force d'attraction infinie exercée par le Bien.

In other words, love, in order to be infinite, must have an infinitely lovable object. More radically still, if it does not aim at that which is infinitely lovable, love itself is hardly love. For it is essential to the nature of love to seek what is infinitely lovable, not only because that which is infinitely lovable, in order to be loved correspondingly, must be loved infinitely, but also because love itself, in order to be truly love, must be directed to something that is infinitely lovable. These aspects of the problem, to be sure, are the two sides of the same coin, and the Principle of Assimilation refers as much to the transformation of the soul's love, by which the soul becomes able to relate correspondingly to its infinitely lovable object, as it does to the soul's discovery of the nature of the love which belongs to it essentially. Thus, if love seeks something beyond Intellect, it is because Intellect itself does not suffice as the proper object of love (and if Being—the totality of true beings—does not suffice for love, no thing will), or because by nature love aims at an "object" that is infinitely lovable.

Moreover, the infinitely lovable cannot be lower matter, which in its utter indetermination is found to be, not the formless which gives form (VI.7 [38] 32.15–17), but that which by itself remains forever formless. Therefore, in Plotinus' metaphysics this object can only be the One tentatively envisioned as boundless erotic power, an infinite power which as such, in turn, can be approached correspondingly not through some generic form of love, but through a love which, true to its very nature as love, must itself be infinite. At this point, this conclusion should not come as a surprise, since as we have seen, according to Plotinus love for the One as infinite erotic power is the very "gift" of the Principle of all whereby the Principle comes to be conceived at the same time as the End of all.

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[19] P. Hadot (1988, 331).

1.2 *Second Precondition of the Ascent: Affinity, or the Kinship between the Soul and the One*

The term “assimilation” in the sense used in this chapter implies a movement or transformation toward that to which the individual soul becomes assimilated. But in order to become assimilated to something, the soul must already be of a certain nature such that the very possibility of assimilation is essentially opened for it. Plotinus understands this possibility in terms of likeness or affinity between the two terms of the assimilation process. What this means is that assimilation is possible only on the basis of a prior kinship or similarity between that which is undergoing the change and the terminus to which it is going to be assimilated. According to Plotinus, if one fails to grant the similarity between the two terms, assimilation remains impossible. The necessity of this similarity is understood as the fundamental factor that allows for some kind of contact between two given terms, and the field to which it applies is broader than that of the ascent (cf. II.4 [12] 10.3–4). I will refer to this necessity as the Principle of Affinity.[20] In the context of the soul’s ascent to the One, the wider applicability of the similarity between two given terms refers specifically to the affinity between the soul qua lover and the One qua ultimate beloved as a precondition of the ascent in general and of union, the last stage of the ascent, in particular.[21] As we shall see, the affinity can also be understood as the presence of the One in the soul.

As with the Principle of Assimilation, also the idea expressed by the Principle of Affinity both predates Plotinus and is found after him.[22] The most obvious passage from Plato where what I have called the Principle of Affinity is clearly hinted is *Republic* VI.490a8–b7, where the affinity is said of the soul with respect to the intelligibles, and the imagery is explicitly erotic. Here is the full text of *Republic* VI.490a8–b7:[23]

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[20] Based on VI.9 [9] 11.32, Igal (1982–1998, I, 98–99) calls it “principio de ‘lo semejante por lo semejante’.” Arnou (1967, chapter 4, especially pages 147–156) uses this principle to explain the difficult question of the immanence and transcendence of the One with respect to all reality.

[21] The kinship between soul and superior realities is often expressed in the same jargon of similarity and affinity already indicated in connection with the Principle of Assimilation (see note 1 above): for example, see I.6 [1] 6.17, V.1 [10] 3.17, V.2 [11] 2.9 for οἰκεῖος; III.5 [50] 1.18 for οἰκειότης; III.5 [50] 1.25 for οἰκειόω; V.2 [11] 1.14 for ὅμοιος (cf. also IV.3 [27] 6.29); V.1 [10] 2.44 for ὁμοειδής (cf. also IV.3 [27] 4.30); I.2 [19] 2.19, I.6 [1] 6.20 (a clear echo of Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b1 and *Republic* X.613b1), V.1 [10] 2.38 for ὁμοιόω; VI.9 [9] 4.27, 8.28 for ὁμοιότης (cf. also V.3 [49] 8.55); V.3 [49] 8.48 for ὁμοίωμα; IV.7 [2] 10.19 for ὁμοούσιος; III.5 [50] 1.18, 44, IV.7 [2] 10.19 for συγγένεια; I.2 [19] 2.24, 4.14, I.6 [1] 2.8, 6.15, III.5 [50] 1.45, IV.7 [2] 10.1, V.1 [10] 1.35, V.3 [49] 6.26, VI.5 [23] 10.36 for συγγενής.

[22] At *De anima* I.2.405b15, Aristotle attributes this principle loosely and collectively to his philosophical predecessors and there he states it briefly: γιγνώσκεσθαι τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ (on the previous Bekker page, at *De anima* I.2.404b11–15, as well as at *Metaphysics* III.4.1000b5–9, the principle is connected to the name of Empedocles: see DK 31.B109; see also Philolaus, DK 44.A29, and Democritus, DK 68.B164); to limit my references to Aristotle to *De anima*, cf. also I.5.409b26–27, 410a24–25, III.3.427a27–28. As expected,

> Then may we not also fairly plead in his defense that the real lover of learning naturally strives toward what is real, and does not linger among the many particular things which are objects of opinion? Keen and unremitting in his love, he will go on till he touches that nature of each thing which is by itself with that part of his soul which is suited to grasp it. But it is suited to what it is akin. Drawing near it and having intercourse with what is really real, begetting thought and truth, he knows and truly lives and is nourished, and thus, but not before, ceases from his travail.

It is fairly obvious that the Principle of Affinity is very closely related to the Principle of Assimilation; at *Enneads* VI.7 [38] 31.8–18 they seem to be presented as two aspects of the same reality. Plotinus points us to the Principle of Affinity as he draws some conclusions about the mythical figure of Eros at III.5 [50] 9.44–45: "for certainly that which is without a share in the Good would not seek the Good" (οὐ γὰρ δὴ τὸ πάμπαν ἄμοιρον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἄν ποτε ζητήσειεν).[24] Among the several passages in which the principle is expressed, one in particular stands out, III.8 [30] 9.19–24:[25]

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there is frequent mention of the principle in several contexts also in Plato, if not explicitly and formally (cf. *Laws* IV.716c2–4), at least implicitly, for instance at *Phaedrus* 255b1–2, *Lysis* 214a6 (= Homer, *Odyssey* XVII.218) and passim, *Republic* VI.490b3–5 (see next note), X.611e2–3; the principle is also assumed in *Timaeus* 37a2–c5 (cf. also 45b2–46c6), as Aristotle indicates at *De anima* I.2.404b17–18.

[23] Plato, *Republic* VI.490a8–b7: Ἆρ᾽ οὖν δὴ οὐ μετρίως ἀπολογησόμεθα ὅτι πρὸς τὸ [a9] ὂν πεφυκὼς εἴη ἁμιλλᾶσθαι ὅ γε ὄντως φιλομαθής, καὶ οὐκ [b1] ἐπιμένοι ἐπὶ τοῖς δοξαζομένοις εἶναι πολλοῖς ἑκάστοις, [b2] ἀλλ᾽ ἴοι καὶ οὐκ ἀμβλύνοιτο οὐδ᾽ ἀπολήγοι τοῦ ἔρωτος, [b3] πρὶν αὐτοῦ ὃ ἔστιν ἑκάστου τῆς φύσεως ἅψασθαι ᾧ [b4] προσήκει ψυχῆς ἐφάπτεσθαι τοῦ τοιούτου—προσήκει δὲ συγγενεῖ—[b5] ᾧ πλησιάσας καὶ μιγεὶς τῷ ὄντι ὄντως, γεννήσας νοῦν [b6] καὶ ἀλήθειαν, γνοίη τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ζῴη καὶ τρέφοιτο καὶ [b7] οὕτω λήγοι ὠδῖνος, πρὶν δ᾽ οὔ; The translation is by R. E. Allen (2006), minimally modified.

[24] ARMSTRONG's translation, slightly adapted.

[25] III.8 [30] 9.19–24: Καὶ γὰρ αὖ τῆς γνώσεως διὰ νοῦ τῶν [20] ἄλλων γινομένης καὶ τῷ νῷ νοῦν γινώσκειν δυναμένων [21] ὑπερβεβηκὸς τοῦτο τὴν νοῦ φύσιν τίνι ἂν ἁλίσκοιτο ἐπιβολῇ [22] ἀθρόᾳ; Πρὸς ὃν δεῖ σημῆναι, ὅπως οἷόν τε, τῷ ἐν [23] ἡμῖν ὁμοίῳ φήσομεν. Ἔστι γάρ τι καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν αὐτοῦ· ἢ [24] οὐκ ἔστιν, ὅπου μὴ ἔστιν, οἷς ἐστι μετέχειν αὐτοῦ. The translation is from ARMSTRONG, with minor changes. Several versions or variations of what I called the Principle of Affinity can be found in the *Enneads*. In the following list, which is not

> For, again, since knowledge of other things comes to us from Intellect, and we are able to know Intellect by intellect, by what sort of simple intuition could one grasp this which transcends the nature of Intellect? We shall say to the person to whom we have to explain how this is possible, that it is by the likeness in ourselves. For there is something of it in us too; or rather there is nowhere where it is not, in the things that can participate in it.

Lines 21–22 of this passage clearly indicate that we can know Intellect only through intellect, but since the One transcends Intellect, the realm of Form or true Being, something other than Intellect is needed in order to grasp it. In this passage, the modality by which the One may be "apprehended" is what Armstrong translates as "simple intuition" (ἐπιβολή ἀθρόα).[26]

For the moment, let me simply notice that the necessity of something other than intellect is required in order to grasp the One and is justified by recourse to the Principle of Affinity. My immediate purpose is to indicate what the element in us is which is akin to the One and by which we are capable of coming in contact with it.

As we briefly saw in Section 3 of Chapter 2, for Plotinus the human being is ultimately identical with his or her soul (and within the soul, its best part or aspect), and by its very nature the soul is incorporeal, preexists the body, and is immortal (see particularly the conclusions reached in treatises I.1. [53] *What is the living being and what is man?* and IV.7 [2] *On the immortality of the*

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exhaustive, each reference is followed by the field from which the principle is borrowed (or to which it is applied): I.8 [51] 1.7–9 (knowledge of evil), II.4 [12] 10.3–4 and 13–17 (knowledge of matter), III.8 [30] 9.19–24 and VI.7 [38] 31.8–18 (loving contact with the One), IV.5 [29] 8.20–30 (sense perception), VI.1 [42] 28.21–25 (refutation of the Stoic notion of ὑποκείμενον), VI.9 [9] 4.25–30 and 11.31–32 (union with the One).

[26] Liddell and Scott (1996, s.v. ἐπιβολή I.2.b): "act of direct apprehension." The term ἐπιβολή is somewhat technical and part of the conceptual jargon of Hellenistic philosophy, typically in Epicureanism (cf. Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 35 = Usener 1887, 3.11–12: ἐπιβολή ἀθρόα; see Bailey 1926, 259–274). In the *Enneads*, the expression ἐπιβολή ἀθρόα (see also προσβολή ἀθρόα at V.5 [32] 7.8) is not reserved to indicate the direct apprehension of the One as it is at III.8 [30] 9.21–22 (at VI.7 [38] 35.21 without the adjective ἀθρόα). Plotinus uses it also to name the apprehension of Intellect by soul (IV.4 [28] 1.20), the apprehension of time and eternity by soul (III.7 [45] 1.4: ἀθροωτέραις ἐπιβολαῖς), as well as the apprehension of objects of vision (II.8 [35] 1.40: ἀθρόως […] ἡ ἐπιβολή). On its own, the term ἐπιβολή is variously employed to indicate the apprehension of all things in one's self (IV.4 [28] 2.12), the apprehension of matter (II.4 [12] 10.3, 5), and in the context of the self-apprehension of Intellect (VI.3 [44] 18.12, VI.6 [34] 6.25, VI.7 [38] 39.2).

soul). We also saw that in its incarnate state, the human soul, analogously to the World-Soul, comprises two distinct levels: the superior (i.e., rational or intellective) and the inferior (i.e., sensitive, vegetative, and sub-vegetative). Since for Plotinus soul qua soul (i.e., soul in its pure or unmixed state) is incorporeal, the several psychic functions or parts (i.e., the inferior level as a whole) are understood as something superadded to soul as this comes to interact with body. However, soul as such, or soul insofar as it is nothing but soul, independently of the body to which it has become attached, is identical with its higher level.

To this bare sketch, we must now add an important element, which constitutes the key to understanding the affinity of the individual soul with higher realities in general and with the One in particular. This element is the presence of the higher hypostases in the soul. I already touched on this point in the last section of Chapter 1, where I remarked that the presence of higher realities in the soul means precisely the ability of the latter to turn toward them and become assimilated to them. In this context, such an ability is grounded in the necessary affinity between the individual soul and those realities. In other words, for the soul to be able to turn toward higher hypostases and become like them, a point of contact between the two terms is needed. This was already somewhat true for Plato, who grounded our possibility of knowing Ideas in the very affinity between them and the soul.[27] Plotinus explicitly radicalizes this Platonic insight: since what is ultimate (both as Principle and as End) is not the realm of Form (i.e., Intellect) but the One, if we are to become assimilated to it there ought to be something in us which is akin to it. Thus, for Plotinus the ascent to the One fundamentally begins as an introspective dynamic, in the awareness of the affinity between ourselves and the universal goal of our connatural *eros*, or again, as I argued in Section 4 of Chapter 1, in the fact that the hypostases (and in this context, the One in particular) are not only separate independent entities, but also levels or degrees of reality to be found in the individual soul. For this reason, Plotinus often emphasizes the importance of introspection for the ascent, most openly in the invitation at I.6 [1] 9.7: "Go back into yourself and look" (Ἄναγε ἐπὶ σαυτὸν καὶ ἴδε; see also I.4 [46] 11.8, I.6 [1] 5.5–16, V.9 [5]

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[27] On the affinity between soul and Ideas in Plato (with the relevant term indicating affinity given in parentheses), see *Phaedo* 79d3 (συγγενὴς), 80a3 (ὅμοιον τῷ θείῳ), *Republic* VI.490b4 (συγγενεῖ); see also *Phaedrus* 246d6–8 (τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ κεκοινώνηκε), *Letters* VII.342d2 (συγγενείᾳ καὶ ὁμοιότητι), VII.344a2–b1 (a2: συγγενῆ; a5–6: προσφυεῖς; a6, 7: συγγενεῖς).

5.31–32,[28] VI.9 [9] 2.35–36, 3.20–21, 7.16–18, 8.38–40).[29] And at VI.5 [23] 1.16–21[30] he poignantly writes:

> …but the ancient nature and the desire of the good, that is of itself, leads to what is really one, and every nature presses on to this, to itself. For this is the good to this one nature, belonging to itself and being itself: but this is being one. It is in this sense that the good is rightly said to be our own; therefore one must not seek it outside.

Three interrelated questions will occupy us here. First, what reasons do we find in Plotinus to justify the plausibility of the Principle of Affinity, particularly insofar as it regulates the affinity between the soul qua lover and the One qua universal final cause? Second, what is the element in us that is akin to the One? And third, how or in what sense is this element akin to the One?

The reason serving as the justification for the Principle of Affinity comprises two aspects, one of which is negative and general, and the other positive and particular. Negatively and generally, one will likely agree that a certain likeness between two given terms is necessary, if any “contact” or “interaction” (for lack of better expressions) between them is to be admitted, as soon as we think of what would happen when all similarity is denied. If two terms have absolutely nothing in common, all contact between them becomes impossible. Notice that although the contact between two terms ordinarily implies some kind of change in both terms involved, in the case of the “contact” between the soul and the One it is only the soul that undergoes change—a change which is identical with the previously introduced notion of assimilation. The One, on its part, strictly does not come in “contact” with anything and remains completely unaffected. As we saw, this is already true of the process of derivation, where in generating, the One abides unchanged and is not directly involved in the maintenance of derived reality.

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[28] Cf. Heraclitus, DK 22.B101.

[29] Thesleff (1980, 107–108, 113) is correct to emphasize the inward tendency of Plotinus’ thought, but I believe he overstates his case when he plays it against the upward tendency implied by the idea of ascent; a quick look at the references in the notes on the terminology of ascent at the beginning of Section 3 of the present chapter should suffice to support my claim.

[30] VI.5 [23] 1.16–21: ἡ δ’ ἀρχαία φύσις καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις [17] τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ, εἰς ἓν ὄντως ἄγει, καὶ ἐπὶ [18] τοῦτο σπεύδει πᾶσα φύσις, ἐφ’ ἑαυτήν. Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ [19] ἀγαθὸν τῇ μιᾷ ταύτῃ φύσει τὸ εἶναι αὐτῆς καὶ εἶναι αὐτήν· [20] τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶναι μίαν. Οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὀρθῶς [21] εἶναι λέγεται οἰκεῖον· διὸ οὐδὲ ἔξω ζητεῖν αὐτὸ δεῖ.

However, even if in principle we concede that no contact is possible between two terms that have absolutely nothing in common, it might still be asked: Why should we admit that the kind of similarity we just conceded is at work between the soul and the One? That is, the Principle of Affinity (i.e., the necessity of a similarity between two terms, no matter how remote, as the basis for their "interaction") may very well be true; but why should it be true of precisely *these* two terms, the soul and the One? The answer to this question is the positive and particular aspect of the justification of the Principle of Affinity. It is an answer that constitutes one of the cornerstones of Plotinus' metaphysical edifice, namely, the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, which I briefly anticipated in Chapter 2.

At its core, this principle states that the cause communicates something of itself to the effect. A very general formulation of the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect is found at IV.3 [27] 10.34–35 in the context of the discussion of the soul's communication of life and form to lifeless and formless matter: "and this is of course common to all that exists, to bring things to likeness with themselves" (καὶ κοινὸν δὴ τοῦτο παντὶ τῷ ὄντι εἰς ὁμοίωσιν ἑαυτῷ ἄγειν). What might appear problematic in the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect is that since in Plotinus' universe there is only one source of all reality, the One, and since, as I argued in Part 1, this source is understood as a simple infinite erotic power, all reality should share in the same similarity with the Source. With respect to the ascent, this means that everything should possess the ability to return to the One precisely on the basis of the similarity it bears to the Source. This is basically true, but in a highly qualified sense. First, as I shall argue more extensively in the next section, it is only that which is of a certain nature and has sufficient and appropriate strength (i.e., sufficient and appropriate erotic power or, simply, love) to turn toward the Principle that may ascend to it. As I indicated in Chapter 2, this excludes pre-cosmic matter, which by itself (i.e., prior to its being fashioned into sensible matter, or body, by soul), is the terminus of the process of derivation, or the point at which all *eros* comes to a stall, for it remains incapable of turning toward the One. Secondly, even that which is capable of turning toward the Principle ought to leave behind lower commitments in order actually to ascend (this is, rephrased, the Principle of Assimilation). Thus, every soul is in principle capable of turning toward the One, but in order to do so, it ought to free or purify itself of everything that is foreign to its nature so as to find within itself that "element" which is most similar to the One and identify with it completely.

Now, what is the nature of this element? In order to answer this question we should return to a point on which I touch briefly at the beginning of my discussion of soul in Chapter 2. There I spoke of the typically Plotinian doctrine concerning an undescended "part" of the soul which is permanently connected to higher hypostases, and to Intellect in particular.[31] Plotinus uses several expression to name the undescended soul: he calls it the sovereign part of the soul (V.3 [49] 3.38: τὸ κύριον τῆς ψυχῆς; IV.4 [28] 18.14–15: ἡμεῖς δὲ κατὰ τὸ κύριον; cf. IV.7 [2] 1.22: Τὸ δὲ κυριώτατον καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος[32]), the primary part of the soul (I.1 [53] 8.6: ψυχῇ τῇ πρώτῃ), the most divine (part) of the soul (V.3 [49] 9.1: τὸ ψυχῆς θειότατον; cf. IV.3 [27] 27.2: θειοτέρας; V.3 [49] 8.48: θεοειδῆ),[33] the best (part) of the soul (V.3 [49] 4.13: τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄμεινον; V.9 [5] 1.12: τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς κρείττων; IV.8 [6] 1.3: τῆς κρείττονος μοίρας; cf. also IV.4 [28] 17.32–34), the best (part) of one's nature (III.9 [13] 2.6 and 7: τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἄριστον and τῷ ἀρίστῳ αὐτοῦ respectively), the superior or above (part) of the soul (IV.8 [6] 8.5–6: τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνω[34]), the intellect of the soul (V.3 [49] 2.14: νοῦς ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς), or intellect in us (V.1 [10] 11.6: νοῦν ἐν ἡμῖν; cf. also III.4 [15] 3.24: μένομεν τῷ μὲν ἄλλῳ παντὶ νοητῷ ἄνω), or the soul which is about Intellect (at I.4 [46] 10.4: ἡ ψυχὴ περὶ αὐτὸν;[35] cf. V.3 [49] 8.49: νοοειδῆ).

We can think of the undescended soul as of an ideal self of which we, in our embodied or empirical self, are aware only intermittently, if at all (see V.1 [10] 12.1–3; cf. also I.4 [46] 4.4–17, IV.3 [27] 8.10–17). The intermediate goals of the work of the embodied individual soul in its process of ascent toward the One are, first, to become pure (καθαρά: I.8 [51] 4.25–27, III.1 [3] 9.13, III.3 [48] 5.18, IV.3 [27] 9.11, IV.7 [2] 10.46, V.3 [49] 9.19; ἀκήρατος: III.5 [50] 2.21, 3.27) soul by leaving behind everything that hinders its assimilation to higher realities, and then to identify itself completely with its undescended part in Intellect (see I.6 [1] 6.13–18, V.3 [49] 4).[36] In this sense, the individual soul's undescended part is its true origin and identity, and thus this Plotinian doctrine is reminiscent of the Platonic view found at *Timaeus* 90a2–b1 (see *Enneads* IV.3 [27] 23.21–27, V.1 [10] 10.21–24, as well as III.4 [15] 5.23 and VI.7 [38] 6.33), according to which human beings are like plants, but plants grown in heaven rather than on earth, insofar as our root, the head as the seat of reason, is located on top and connects us to what is above our bodily condition (cf. also Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* IV.10.686b31–687a2, *Progression of Animals* 5.706b3–6).

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[31] Later Neoplatonists will be divided on the issue. For instance, Theodorus of Asine will endorse it (so also Damascius, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* IV.15.1–5), while Iamblichus and Proclus will reject it (see Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* III, 333.28–334.28; cf. also *Elements of Theology* 211); see further references in Dodds (1963, 309).

[32] Cf. O'Daly (1973, 29).

[33] The undescended (part of the) soul is very likely what Plotinus was referring to with the expression "τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν θεῖον" (accepting the reading of HS$_1$ and Brisson et al. 1992, as against τὸν ἐν ὑμῖν θεὸν of HS$_2$), which according to Porphyry's report in VP 2.26–27 was part of the last words that the dying Plotinus uttered to Eustochius: "Try to bring back the divine in us to the divine in the All" (ARMSTRONG'S translation, modified to fit the reading I follow).

[34] This should not be confused with the superior or higher soul as referring to the Soul-Hypostasis.

[35] Cf. McGroarty (2006, 152).

[36] On the purity of intellectual activity in individual souls, see III.5 [50] 7.53–54, IV.4 [28] 2.24–25, V.3 [49] 3.21, 28.

However, to stop at the general notion of an undescended soul permanently abiding in the noetic realm will not suffice as an answer to the question concerning the nature of our higher element, for according to Plotinus the end of the ascent is not Intellect but the One. It follows that if assimilation to the One is to be possible, in accordance with the Principle of Affinity there ought to be something, either above the undescended soul or in it as its uppermost "part," "element," or "aspect,"[37] which bears some resemblance not only to Intellect, but to the One itself; in Plotinus' own words: "something of the One which the soul has within itself" (ἐν αὐτῇ ἔχουσά τι αὐτοῦ: VI.7 [38] 31.8), or "that which in us is similar to it" (τῷ ἐν ἡμῖν ὁμοίῳ: III.8 [30] 9.22–23), "the power in oneself akin to that which comes from the One" (τῇ ἐν αὐτῷ δυνάμει συγγενεῖ τῷ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ: VI.9 [9] 4.27–28), "the god who is in each one of us one and the same" (τὸν ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν θεὸν ὡς ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτόν: VI.5 [23] 1.3–4), or, more straightforwardly, "what is akin to the One" (τῷ συγγενεῖ: VI.9 [9] 8.29).

All these descriptions confirm Plotinus' commitment to the Principle of Affinity, but tell us relatively little about the nature of this finest element in us. Plotinus is somewhat more explicit in other passages. To begin, he designates this element with several expressions, all of which point at its privileged status in Plotinian psychology. For example, in the chapter following the passage cited earlier from treatise III.8 [30] Plotinus refers to it as "the inside of oneself" (ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ: III.8 [30] 10.33). More in keeping with the theme of the kinship of this element with the One, he describes it with some of the images already employed to talk about the One, such as "origin" and "center." Thus, at VI.9 [9] 3.20–21 he calls this element "the origin in oneself" (τὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀρχὴν; cf. also VI.9 [9] 11.31–32), and at VI.9 [9] 8.19–20 he speaks of it as "one's center" (τὸ ἑαυτῶν κέντρον; see further VI.9 [9] 10.17, V.1 [10] 11.10–15). Moreover, since this element of the soul can only be the best aspect of its best part, and the soul's best part is its rational part, elsewhere Plotinus shifts his descriptive focus to its noetic dimension and calls it "pure intellect" (καθαρῷ τῷ νῷ: VI.9 [9] 3.26) or

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[37] As already with the process of derivation, so also in the context of the ascent all such terms as "above," "in," "beyond," "level," "part," and so forth, indicate a difference in status and are not to be understood spatially.

“the primary part of intellect” (τοῦ νοῦ τῷ πρώτῳ: VI.9 [9] 3.27). But such qualifications as “pure” and “primary” already point to the idea that the relation of our best element to the noetic realm implies a significant difference and, as it were, a departure from Intellect. This difference consists not only in the fact that our best element, being an element of *our* intellect, is not strictly identical with the hypostasis Intellect; what is more essential here is that the primary part of intellect implies at the same time a transcendence of the noetic realm altogether. In order to express this, Plotinus employs the language of both negation and transcendence, as he habitually does when he speaks about the One. Thus, he refers to the best element of the rational part of the soul as “that of it which is not intellect” (τῷ ἑαυτοῦ μὴ νῷ: V.5 [32] 8.22–23), and “the origin, cause, and god of Intellect [...] in us” (ἐν ἡμῖν [...] τὴν νοῦ ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν καὶ θεόν: V.1 [10] 11.6–7).[38]

To restate my point, the best element of the (undescended) soul is described either in terms of negation or in terms of transcendence. Far from being a problem for Plotinus, this simply points to the fact that the term of comparison of this highest element, the One, is itself ineffable, as we saw in Section 2 of Chapter 1. Therefore, the similarity between the One and this highest element of the soul found in the expressions used to describe them is not merely a verbal issue; instead, the words used here are an attempt at capturing the kinship in the very nature of these realities, the factor which makes them alike and allows for the possibility of assimilation of the soul to the One.

I suggest that this nature can be positively, if tentatively, described in two ways: as unity and as love. Thus, the best aspect of the best element in us is where our love is simplest, that is, most focused and unified, or least kept apart from its desideratum. It is perhaps in treatise VI.8 [39], *On free will and the will of the One*, that we find the most extensive positive description of the best part of ourselves—what from now on we may refer to as the center of the soul. Here is what Plotinus writes at VI.8 [39] 15.14–23 (my emphasis):[39]

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[38] For a possible antecedent of this notion see *Chaldean Oracles* fr. 1.

[39] VI.8 [39] 15.14–23: εἴ ποτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐνίδοιμέν τινα φύσιν τοιαύτην [15] οὐδὲν ἔχουσαν τῶν ἄλλων, ὅσα συνήρτηται ἡμῖν, καθὰ [16] πάσχειν ὅ τί περ ἂν συμβῇ [καὶ] κατὰ τύχην ὑπάρχει—[17] πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἄλλα, ὅσα ἡμῶν, δοῦλα κἀκκείμενα τύχαις [18] καὶ οἷον κατὰ τύχην προσελθόντα τούτῳ δὲ μόνῳ τὸ κύριον [19] αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον φωτὸς ἀγαθοειδοῦς καὶ ἀγαθοῦ [20] ἐνεργείᾳ καὶ μείζονος ἢ κατὰ νοῦν, οὐκ ἐπακτὸν τὸ ὑπὲρ [21] τὸ νοεῖν ἐχούσης· εἰς ὃ δὴ ἀναβάντες καὶ γενόμενοι τοῦτο [22] μόνον, τὰ δ’ ἄλλα ἀφέντες, τί ἂν εἴποιμεν αὐτὸ ἢ ὅτι πλέον [23] ἢ ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πλέον ἢ αὐτεξούσιοι; ARMSTRONG’S translation, with minor changes.

> if we ever see *in ourselves* a nature of this kind which has nothing of the other things which are attached to us by which we have to experience whatever happens by chance—for all the other things which belong to us are enslaved to and exposed to chances and come to us in a way by chance, but this alone has self-mastery and self-determination by the activity of a light that has the form of the Good[40] and is itself good, and greater than that which belongs to Intellect, having its transcendence of Intellect *not as something brought in from the outside*; surely, when we ascend to this and *become this alone and let the rest go*,[41] what can we say of it except that we are more than free and more than self-determined?

The context of the discussion is that of the freedom of the One, or rather of its spontaneous self-positing in which freedom and necessity coincide, which I discussed earlier. What I believe can be safely deduced from this passage about the nature of the similarity between the One and the best element in us is that the affinity of these two poles should be understood in terms of self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον: line 19),[42] which for the soul follows directly from the activity (ἐνεργείᾳ: line 20) of its best element. The soul's self-determination is thus analogous to the freedom or spontaneous self-positing of the One, to which in the first two chapters I referred as henologic freedom (or henologic necessity). As I observed, one of the essential features of henologic freedom is the total absence of distance between what the One is and that which it desires, a complete identity justifying the description of the One as simultaneously beloved, love, and love of itself (VI.8 [39] 15.1).

If the interpretation I just sketched is correct, the affinity between our best element and the One lies in the very possibility we have to identify ourselves with what is best in us, our ideal self. In this identification the gap between what we are, or what ultimately we have become, and what we connaturally desire to be has been reduced to a minimum;[43] everything spurious has been left behind and does not determine our identity anymore, for we no longer desire it: we are no longer erotically committed to it. This identification of the soul with its finest element is a definitive, unconditional "yes" that the soul says to what it has become. The soul *is*, in its purity, this "yes": a love gathered unto itself, no longer scattered into a multiplicity of (often competing) directions and trajectories, but fully focused on the One as that which, being most worthy of love and most longed for (ποθεινότατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25), in the end is *actually* most loved (ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15).

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[40] See again Plato, *Republic* VI.509a3.

[41] Cf. V.3 [49] 17.32–38.

[42] For helpful comments on the meaning and use of the term αὐτεξούσιον, see Rist (1967, 120–121), Leroux (1990, 257–258), McGroarty (2006, 132).

[43] I speak of "a minimum" rather than of "nothing" because I maintain that for Plotinus even the identification with one's best element is still not an unqualified identification with the One, which would result in the annihilation of the individual soul. I will have occasion to comment further on this point in the next chapter as I deal with the issue of the soul's union with the One.

However, the fact that this identification with one's center is an open possibility already indicates that in its embodied condition the individual soul is far from being pure according to Plotinus. Its finest element, the center of the soul, is real, but ordinarily the soul's identification with it is at best partial, and much needs to be done if the soul is to reintegrate the love invested in all its lower commitments into its one true nature. This work of reintegration is what I referred to as the ascent, which will be the direct focus of the rest of this and the next chapter.

In bringing this section to a close, let it be noticed that the second precondition of the ascent (i.e., affinity between the One and soul) is prior to the first (i.e., assimilation of the soul to the One) only when we look at both conditions from the perspective of the ascending soul. The priority becomes at least blurred, however, if we consider that the incipient stage of the generation of a lower hypostasis from a higher one is that in which the generated entity is not only most akin to its generator but in a sense also most assimilated to it. Perhaps it will be more appropriate to say that affinity and assimilation are mutually implicating, for if, on the one hand, it is true that assimilation of a lower term to a higher one depends on a prior affinity between two terms, on the other, the affinity of the two terms is either *de facto* the most intense assimilation possible of the lower to the higher (e.g., of pre-hypostatic noetic matter to the One, or again, of pre-hypostatic psychic matter to Intellect), or else it is *already for the sake of* a more intense assimilation (thus, awareness of the affinity of the best element of a yet unpurified, or partially purified, soul with higher realities already points to the task of perfecting its still partial assimilation to them).

In the remainder of this chapter I will deal with four general points directly bearing on the nature of the ascent and its relation to love: first, what we might loosely call the "subject" of the ascent, namely, the individual soul which bears the innate love for the One; second, Plotinus' varied terminology of ascent, including some remarks on what might be the role of the One in the soul's return journey to it; third, the difference between hypostatic *eros*, *eros* as one of the possible paths of the ascent, and *eros* as the fundamental regulative concept of all movement of ascent toward the One; fourth, some features that are common to all the stages of the ascent.

2 The Subject of the Ascent: The Individual Soul as Bearer of the Love for the One

Let us begin with the question concerning the subject of the ascent. So far, I have been speaking of individual soul, rational soul, or soul as that which ascends. This way of speaking needs to be made more precise. We can ask the question simply: Who or what ascends? That is, who or what undergoes the process of gradual reintegration into higher realities expressed and regulated by the Principle of Assimilation? Can a rock, an oak tree, or a trout ascend and thus be assimilated to the One? Or is the ascent the prerogative of a human being? And what about such higher realities as the World-Soul, the Soul-Hypostasis, and Intellect: do they ascend? Does the whole of reality undergo a process of assimilation to its source, the One?

Plotinus' answer to these questions is not entirely free of interpretive difficulties, most notably in relation to the issues of Forms of individuals and of reincarnation, but I take it that it may be coherently, if tentatively, reconstructed from the text of the *Enneads*. This answer, I suggest, is that the subject of the ascent is the individual soul insofar as it is the bearer of the connatural *eros* ultimately directed to the One discussed in Chapter 3, and for this soul to ascend means gradually to reform its love until it is actually and wholly oriented toward the One.

To begin, one item of Plotinian metaphysics, the undescended soul, can immediately be ruled out from the contention for the title of "subject of the ascent." Given that the present perspective, or the (relative) starting point of the process of ascent, is that of an embodied individual soul, it is obviously not the undescended soul which is involved in this process for, to put it banally, not being descended to the level of body, neither can it ascend from that level. Then what exactly is the individual entity that is involved in the ascent?

The issue is complicated by Plotinus's view of individuality and comprises at least two interconnected questions, which will be dealt with jointly in what follows. First, what is that makes an individual (τὸ καθέκαστον, τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον)[44] an individual? In other (though somewhat anachronistic) words, what is the

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[44] Τὸ καθέκαστον and τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον (also used in the plural and adverbially) are the standard expressions to indicate the individual or the particular: see Sleeman and Pollet (1980, s.v. καθέκαστα, καθ' ἕκαστα). Another term sometimes used to designate the individual as contrasted with the species (εἶδος) is ἄτομον: see VI.2 [43] 2.8, 13, 33, 22.12, VI.3 [44] 1.15, 9.37, VI.7 [38] 17.22. Cf. Tornau (2009, 339 note 2) for further references.

Plotinian principle of individuation?[45] Second, based on the answer given to the first question, who or what can be counted as an individual in Plotinus' universe? The issue is as thorny as the question concerning the status of lower matter, due to both a particular lack of clarity on the topic in the *Enneads*[46] and some difficulty in systematically integrating it with other elements of Plotinus' metaphysics. As a consequence, there is a lack of substantial agreement among Plotinus scholars concerning the answers to be given to the two questions I just posed—a lack of agreement which, I suspect, suggests that we may be in the presence of a structural impasse in Plotinus' metaphysics. For these reasons, I will limit my account to a general outline of the problem, providing the basic tenets of my tentative position in the main text and confining some of the controversial points to the footnotes.

In Plotinian scholarship, the issue of individuality is typically discussed under the rubric of Forms (or Ideas) of individuals (or of particulars).[47] Plotinus deals with the topic explicitly, if rather concisely, in *Enneads* v.7 [18], on whether there are Forms of individuals (Περὶ τοῦ εἰ καὶ τῶν καθέκαστά ἐστιν εἴδη). From the standpoint of the purpose of its composition and genre, Ferrari rightly insists that this treatise should not be read as an organic discussion of Forms of individuals, but rather as a *quaestio* whose purpose is to present some of the difficulties (and some tentative solutions) facing Plotinus' metaphysics once we accept the hypothesis of the existence of these Forms.[48] From a more conceptual standpoint, O'Meara observes that "the question whether or not there are Forms of individuals must seem to the Platonist about as valid as the question whether or not there are square circles."[49] This is so because normally the role of Platonic Forms or Ideas is minimally understood to be that of providing an explanation for whatever is taken to be identical, and thus designated with the same term in a given language, in a plurality of different individuals (cf. Plato, *Republic* x.596a6–7). Thus, in Aristotle's understanding a Platonic Form is said to be a "one-over-many" (ἕν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς: *On Ideas* fr. 3 = Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 80.14; ἕν ἐπὶ πολλῶν: *Metaphysics* vii.16.1040b29), namely, an Aristotelian universal (τὸ καθόλου; see *De interpretatione* 7.17a39–40, *Posterior Analytics* ii.19.100a6–7; cf. *Metaphysics* iii.6.1003a7–12, v.26.1023b29–32, vii.13.1038b16, 16.1040b25–30, *Eudemian Ethics* i.8.1218a7–9). Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether Platonic Forms should in fact be considered identical with Aristotelian universals. That the answer to this question may be negative is due not only to considerations which, not being directly relevant to our present concerns, I will not address explicitly,[50] but also to the possibility that Plotinus might in fact have thought of the existence of Forms of individuals as highly plausible. For if there are Forms of individuals, the Aristotelian interpretation according to which each Form is a "one-over-many" may apply to some Forms, but not to all Forms, thus calling into question the reduction of Platonic Forms to Aristotelian universals.

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[45] Put in the terms of the *principium individuationis*, the question will be elaborated explicitly only later in the history of Western philosophy, whether in the Middle Ages (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* i.d25.q1.a1.arg6, *De veritate* q2.a6.ad1, *Summa theologiae* i.q75.a4.co.; Scotus, *Ordinatio* ii.d3.p1.qq1–7) or in modernity (e.g., Leibniz, *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* of 1663 = Leibniz 1875–1890, iv, 15–26; Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* ii.27 = Leibniz 1875–1890, v, 213–214; Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* i, § 23, 134 = Schopenhauer 2010, 137–138), but this does not mean that Plotinus lacked awareness of the problem.

[46] Cf. Bréhier (1924–1938, v, 122).

[47] Here is a list of some of the most important modern contributions on the issue of Forms of individuals in Plotinus, sometimes provided in the context of debates about his views on human identity and what Plotinus calls the "we" (cf. Chapter Two note 102): Heinemann (1921, 63–73), Arnou (1967, 208–212), Capone Braga (1928; 1954, 157–163), Covotti (1935, 215–219), Trouillard (1955b, 76–80), Cilento (1961, 205–211), Rist (1963; 1967, 86–88, 110–111; 1970a), Blumenthal (1966, revised in 1971, 112–133; 1998, 119; 1999, 99–101), Mamo (1969), Igal (1973, 91–98), Armstrong (1977), Helleman-Elgersma (1980, 338–345), Gatti (1996, 157–161), Gerson (1994, 72–78), Ferrari (1997; 1998), Kalligas (1997), O'Meara (1999c), Petit (1999), Sorabji (2000), D'Ancona Costa (2002), Aubry (2004, 201, 236–238; 2008, 277–288), Ousager (2004, 32–38), Nikulin (2005), Remes (2007, 59–91), Vassilopoulou (2006), Chiaradonna (2008, especially 284–286), Tornau (2009); see also the study on the self in Plotinus by O'Daly (1973). For an overview of the problem beyond Plotinus see Graeser (1996).

[48] Ferrari (1997, 37, 46, 60–61; 1998, 629–630, 652–653); see also Tornau (2009, 337 note 1).

What, then, is the main difference between Forms of individuals and other Forms? Gerson observes that "Forms may themselves be individuals" (by which I take him to mean relative unities more than numerically distinct from other relative unities, given that the only absolute unity is the One), "but they are not *of* individuals."[51] As he explains,[52] the main difference between Forms of individuals and other Forms, then, is that while the latter (e.g., the Form of man) stand in a one-many relation (in the sense that the same Form of man is present *simultaneously* in Socrates and Plato), Forms of individuals stand in a one-one relation (in the sense that what we have come to call the Form of Socrates is present only in one embodied individual *at a time*, although it may be present in other embodied individuals—e.g., Pythagoras—*at other times:* see Plotinus V.7 [18] 1[53]).

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[49] O'Meara (1999c, 263).

[50] For a negative answer, implicitly operative in the context of Plato's *Parmenides* 131e8–132b2, see M. L. Gill (in Gill and Ryan 1996, 29–38); for a negative answer in Platonism in general, see Gerson (2004).

[51] Gerson (1994, 72, my emphasis).

[52] Gerson (1994, 76–77).

But why speculate about the possibility of Forms of individuals at all? What questions are they supposed to answer? The issue of whether or not there are such Forms has a long history antedating Plotinus.[54] What could have led some Platonists to consider the possibility of positing Forms of individuals is the Aristotelian criticism of the (Platonic) argument that to establish the existence of Forms or Ideas from thinking (νοεῖν)—that is, from the fact that the thought of a particular thing remains even when that thing has perished—will lead to postulate Forms of things that are both particular (καθ' ἕκαστα) and perishable (φθαρτά), such as Socrates and Plato (see Aristotle, *On Ideas* fr. 3 = Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 81.25–82.7; cf. *Metaphysics* I.9.990b14).[55] Thus, Platonists arguing for the existence of Forms of individuals might have articulated their support for their view as a consequence of this criticism by Aristotle (presumably stressing the "particular" and downplaying the "perishable" in the criticism), while those who opposed it would have had to make the initial Platonic argument in favor of Forms stronger, find a flaw in Aristotle's criticism, or both.[56]

Now, as I hinted earlier, it appears that in contrast with most of his Platonic predecessors (e.g., Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* IX.163.24–30)[57] Plotinus thought that Forms of individuals do exist. The texts in which the issue of Forms of individuals emerges explicitly are V.7 [18], V.9 [5] 12, and VI.5 [23] 8 (particularly lines 22–46). Other texts may include IV.3 [27] 5 (especially lines 8–11) and

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[53] In this context, Plotinus alludes to the doctrine of reincarnation, whereby what he calls "an absolute Socrates" (Αὐτοσωκράτης: V.7 [18] 1.4) is capable of becoming instantiated in different people (i.e., different embodied individuals) at different times, although only in one at any given time.

[54] See Gerson (1994, 73–74), Ferrari (1997, 26–33; 1998, 631–636), Kalligas (1997, 206–208), O'Meara (1999c, 263–266).

[55] However, notice that the notion of something analogous to Forms of individuals might have been envisioned even by Aristotle at *Metaphysics* XII.5.1071a24–29; other Aristotelian passages that may point at Forms of individuals include *De anima* I.4.408a20–23, II.2.413b24–27, *Metaphysics* III.4.999b19–20, VII.11.1037a5–10, 13.1038b8–16, and the already cited *On Ideas* fr. 3.

[56] For a rebuttal of Aristotle's criticism, arguing for an equivocal use of the term νοεῖν in *On Ideas* fr. 3, see Gerson (1994, 73).

[57] Other ancient sources attesting the issue of Forms of individuals include: Iamblichus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* fr. 1; Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* III.815.21–22, 824.9–825.25, IV.888.26–27. If one concedes the possibility of equating Forms of individuals and undescended souls, Plotinus himself recognizes his heterodoxy on this point: see IV.8 [6] 8.1–3; cf. also V.1 [10] 10.13–18, V.3 [49] 3.21–26.

6.15–17, VI.2 [43] 22.11–17, VI.4 [22] 14.17–31, VI.5 [23] 7, VI.7 [38] 8.1–5, 9.20–46, 11.14–15. However, scholarly opinion is not unanimous about the import of the second set of passages; and even about the first set there is no agreement as to whether Plotinus always thought that there are in fact Forms of individuals. Most scholars now tend to favor a positive answer, although disagreeing about the precise status of such Forms.[58]

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[58] What follows is only a rough outline of some notable views on the issue, again often embedded in debates about Plotinus' position on individuality in general and the identity of the "we".

(1) A positive answer to the question of whether Plotinus endorses the existence of Forms of individuals has been formulated, often with conspicuous differences and qualifications, by: Capone Braga (1928; 1954, 157–163), Bréhier (1924–1938, V, 119–122), Covotti (1935, 215–219), Rist (1963; 1970a), Mamo (1969), Igal (1973, 96–98; but Igal 1982–1998, III, 131 is more cautious), Armstrong (1977; ARMSTRONG I, xxi–xxii and V, 220–221, 314–315 note 1), Helleman-Elgersma (1980, 338–345), Gerson (1994, 77–78), Kalligas (1997), Ferrari (1997; 1998), Petit (1999), Ousager (2004, 32–38), Remes (2007, 59–91), Tornau (2009), Sikkema (2009); granting it in preliminary fashion, O'Meara (1999c, 268–269).

(2) D'Ancona Costa (2002, especially 559–561) argues that what individualizes Socrates is certainly an intelligible principle, but this principle is his undescended soul, not a Form, since a fundamental feature of Forms accepted by Plotinus is that they act causally as a "one over many," that is, they *are* those features which their particular participants only *have*. This implies that in the intelligible realm there are both Forms and souls.

(3) Aubry (2008, especially 275–281) also favors the individual's presence in the intelligible and agrees that for Plotinus individuality is determined by an intelligible principle, but, based on a reading of II.6 [17], the treatise chronologically prior to the one about Forms of individuals (V.7 [18]), she argues that this principle is not a Form but a λόγος, that is, the expression of a superior hypostasis at a lower level of reality, or as Aubry herself puts it, "la forme formatrice par l'intermédiaire de laquelle l'âme va déployer dans le sensible la Forme intelligible qu'elle contemple. A l'âme, ou l'intellect, individuel, s'ajoute donc le *logos* qui contient les caractéristiques de la Forme de l'Homme (plutôt que du démon, de l'animal *etc*)" (Aubry 2008, 276).

(4) Some authors argue that Plotinus does not seem to have a clear position on the issue. Thus, Blumenthal (1971, 112–133; 1999, 99–101), followed by Nikulin (2005, 298), thinks that Plotinus holds different views in different treatises (i.e., positive in V.7 [18], and negative in the earlier V.9 [5] 12); see also Isnardi Parente (1984, 116–120), Dillon and Blumenthal (2015, 193–196) commenting on IV.3 [27] 5.5–18. Reale (2004, VIII, 101) claims that the view according to which Plotinus endorsed the existence of Forms of individuals is "molto equivoco, dato che a Plotino manca proprio il concetto di individuo come *singolarità irripetibile*." Along the same lines, Gatti (1996, 157 and 161) stresses the aporetic character of Plotinus' position

To reiterate my central question, what reasons did Plotinus (or any other Platonist) possibly have to posit Forms of individuals? One reason, which we may call external, is that he was very likely aware of Aristotle's criticism of Forms as thoughts mentioned above, which reasonably he might have wanted to counter. Another reason, an internal one, is that within his system the principle of individuation cannot be matter, since individuation is a kind of determination, while matter is not only free of all determination but is itself the principle of indetermination and privation of form. As such, matter is naturally incapable of serving as a determining or informing factor in any way, and all it can "contribute" are either types of privation, such as things which originate from putrefaction, savage beasts, dirt, and mud (V.9 [5] 14.7–11), or evils (I.8 [51] 1.11–12, V.9 [5] 10.18–20), both of which find no place in the intelligible world, although Plotinus does recognize that there are some physical differences that may appear problematic within this scheme.[59] From this it follows that the principle of individuation, if we are to admit that there are individuals at all,[60] is to be "situated" in the intelligible realm. In other words, *at least* for each human being (and *arguably only* for each human being), that is, for a sensible individual endowed with intellect, there is one Form, which as such is located in Intellect as an integral member of Intellect.[61] It follows that ultimately the

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on the issue. For an earlier, different critical assessment see Capone Braga (1954, 161–163).

(5) Chiaradonna (2008, 284–286), echoed by Tornau (2009, 338 note 3), remarks that Plotinus' purpose in speaking of Forms of individuals is not so much to establish an intelligible foundation of individuality, as to guarantee the possibility of ascent for individual souls. According to Chiaradonna, the question about the principle of individuation was of little interest to Plotinus.

(6) Vassilopoulou (2006) argues that Plotinus never postulated (and never needed to postulate) the existence of Forms of individuals.

(7) Heinemann (1921, 63–73) goes so far as to consider treatise V.7 [18] spurious.

[59] Cf., e.g., Blumenthal (1971, 113–114), Gerson (1994, 115), Gatti (1996, 159), O'Meara (1999c, 267), Reale (2004, VIII, 101), Aubry (2008, 283).

[60] It is obvious that if by individuality one means utter indivisibility or unqualified simplicity, the only possible individual in Plotinus' metaphysics will be the One (as explicitly argued by Ousager 2004, 15–119), and any other kind of individuality will be only a likeness of it.

[61] Tornau (2009, 344 note 3) claims that for Plotinus "individual soul" (Τὰς δὴ καθέκαστα ψυχὰς: IV.8 [6] 4.1) roughly means "human soul" (τῆς ἀνθρωπείας ψυχῆς: IV.8 [6] 3.1). However, there is disagreement as to whether we should postulate Forms of individuals only for particulars with soul (e.g., Cherniss 1944, 508; Rist 1963), individuals with intellect (Gerson 1994, 75–76; Kalligas 1997, 212), or consider admitting them also for other particulars (Ferrari 1997,43–45, 57–62; O'Meara 1999c, 268). More cautiously, Rist (1970a,

root of our identity is to be found, not in any embodied instance, but in the intelligible realm.

If this is how the matter stands, the significance of Forms of individuals for our main topic in this section, the subject of the ascent, should now be apparent, for it would not seem unreasonable to think of the Form of an individual as both the index of one's origin in Intellect and the condition of possibility of the ascent. Plotinus seems to confirm this at V.7 [18] 1.1–5:[62]

> Is there also an idea of each particular thing? Yes, if I and each one of us have a way of ascent to the intelligible, the principle of each of us is also there. If Socrates, *that is the soul of Socrates*, always exists, there will be an absolute Socrates in the sense that, insofar as they are soul, individuals are also said to exist in this way in the intelligible world.

Nevertheless, I must admit that a definitive grasp of the issue escapes me. On the one hand, I am inclined to follow those authors who identify Forms of individuals with souls (or, more precisely, with undescended souls),[63] an identification that may be supported by appealing to a number of passages from the *Enneads* where souls are said to be Forms, which as such abide permanently in Intellect (e.g., I.1 [53] 2.5–7, 4.18–19, I.6 [1] 6.13–18, III.6 [26] 18.24–26, IV.4 [28] 16.18–19, VI.5 [23] 7). On the other hand, this position is not unanimously accepted, and the precise status of Forms of individuals remains

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299) writes that "although it is probable that Plotinus accepts Ideas of all individuals, he seems to find Ideas of men the most acceptable, Ideas of animals less so, and presumably Ideas of inanimate things least of all." Among those contending that Plotinus (e.g., V.7 [18] 3.7–23) might have envisaged the possibility of Forms of individuals also for other particulars, O'Meara (1999c, 267) argues that at V.9 [5] 10.1–2 Plotinus explicitly provides the formula that regulates the casuistry of Forms of individuals: "All things, then, which exist as forms in the world of sense come from that intelligible world; those which do not, do not" ("Οσα μὲν οὖν ὡς εἴδη ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ ἐστι, ταῦτα [2] ἐκεῖθεν· ὅσα δὲ μή, οὔ); cf. also VI.7 [38] 11.3–4.

[62] V.7 [18] 1.1–5: Εἰ καὶ τοῦ καθέκαστόν ἐστιν ἰδέα; Ἢ εἰ ἐγὼ καὶ [2] ἕκαστος τὴν ἀναγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν ἔχει, καὶ ἑκάστου [3] ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐκεῖ. Ἢ εἰ μὲν ἀεὶ Σωκράτης καὶ ψυχὴ Σωκράτους [4] ἔσται Αὐτοσωκράτης, καθὸ ᾗ ψυχὴ καθέκαστα καὶ <ὡς [5] λέγεται> ἐκεῖ [ὡς λέγεται ἐκεῖ]. I accept the transposition of ὡς λέγεται from line 5 to lines 4–5 (as with Volkmann 1883, HS$_2$, ARMSTRONG, Igal 1973, 91–92, and Igal 1982–1998, 133 note 1, although Igal 1973, 91 proposed a different solution; *contra* Cilento 1947–1949). The translation in the main text is by ARMSTRONG, minimally modified; the emphasis is mine.

[63] The identification of Forms of individuals with souls (in particular with the undescended part of the soul) was voiced by Cherniss (1944, 508) and is variously advocated and developed by a number of authors (e.g., Kalligas 1997; Ferrari 1997, 47–53; Tornau 2009).

a matter of dispute. Rist, for example, openly criticizes Cherniss' identification of these Forms with souls because such a solution would blur Plotinus' distinction between soul and Intellect to the point of making it pointless.[64] But precisely because one sees the truth of this criticism (unless the term "Form" is used equivocally to designate the intelligibles in Intellect and in the expression "Forms of individuals"), one might also wonder, first, why Plotinus does not quite treat the two problems—Forms of individuals and undescended souls—as the same problem, and second, if the two are not in fact the same problem, how precisely they differ, since one of the two entities seems to be somewhat superfluous in his system. My suspicion, partly grounded in some of the observations by the scholars cited in note 58 (4) above, is that Plotinus might have been struggling with an issue, that of individuality, which he did not perceive in full transparency (or for which he may have lacked the conceptual tools to display it in full transparency, even independently of the problem of his notoriously intractable style), although I am also aware of the risk of projecting my own lack of understanding onto a thinker whose ability to reach understanding on many difficult issues is not in question.

What I think can be safely asserted is that it would be wrong to think that just because Plotinus in all likeness endorses the view that there are Forms at least for embodied individuals endowed with intellect, he must also equate these individuals with their Forms without any further qualification. Stated differently, just because the principle of individuation of a human being (which, again, in this context is what I understand by an embodied individual endowed with intellect) is an intelligible principle, whatever this might be exactly (the undescended soul, a Form, a λόγος or set of λόγοι, etc.), it does not mean that a discussion of the issue of individuality is exhausted through a discussion of this principle.

Two points should be considered in this regard. The first is precisely that the issue of human individuality in the *Enneads* is broader than the issue of Forms of individuals. The second is that a speculative interest in individuality (whether in terms of the medieval question of the principle of individuation or in light of the modern emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual) is probably not Plotinus' main purpose for addressing the question of Forms of individuals.

The second point can be addressed quickly by looking back to the previous pages, where I already noted that one of Plotinus' major reasons to introduce Forms of individuals is to establish a permanent connection between the individual embodied soul and the noetic realm. As Chiaradonna suggests,[65] when Plotinus discusses Forms of individuals, his primary interest does not lie in establishing a principle of (human) individuality, but rather in providing a theoretical reason for the ascent. The same reason for Plotinus' interest in the issue of Forms of individuals (explicitly found in the *Enneads* at V.7 [18] 1.1–3) was already pointed out by Ferrari,[66] who supplements it with two further motives. One, which he calls "macrosistematica," is the fact that to deprive individuals of all intelligible content (and/or to assume that individuals of the same species have the same intelligible content[67]) would mean to diminish the instrumental causality of Intellect and, consequently, of the One. Another motive emerges in the context of the quarrel with the Gnostics, for whom all that is sensible is evil; for Plotinus, by contrast, sensible beings—and *a fortiori* rational embodied individuals such as human beings—are expressions of the intelligible.

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[64] Cf. Rist (1967, 86–87); see also Gerson (1994, 254–255 note 19) and the discussion in Remes (2007, 76–85).

[65] Chiaradonna (2008, 284–286).

As for the first point, authors generally agree that the question of individuality in the *Enneads*, while virtually always discussed in connection with Forms of individuals in Plotinian scholarship, is broader that the issue of Forms of individuals. In fact, in addition to a specifically intelligible principle (again, whatever this may be: a Form, the undescended soul, a λόγος or set of λόγοι, etc.), two other factors are involved in the composition of the human individual, namely, the sensible living body and what Plotinus calls the "we" (ἡμεῖς). The "we" amounts to the historical person endowed with consciousness and freedom of choice, and requires the confluence of the first two factors (i.e., the intelligible principle and the sensible living body).[68] The interaction of these three factors is what constitutes the texture of individuality, allowing some authors to speak of a double-self theory, with an ideal self on the one hand (i.e., the undescended soul or the Form of the individual) and an endowed self on the other (i.e., the embodied human soul, seat of consciousness and freedom choice).[69]

Once again, what presently concerns us is the fact that this distinction is directly related to the major reason for which Plotinus might have introduced the issue of Forms of individuals, namely, the ascent itself. More specifically, the ideal self or ontological ground of individuality is not immediately available to the endowed self or empirical individual. On the contrary, to become identified with one's ideal self depends on a decision which can rightly be called ethical.[70] To act in accordance with this decision is identical with the process of ascent to that which, though always available to each individual soul, is not quite realized or integrated (yet) in one's conscious identity. As Tornau remarks, "l'« ascension » de l'âme vers l'Intellect est la restauration d'un état de bonheur qui existe toujours déjà, qu'elle ne perd jamais vraiment, *mais qu'elle doit actualiser et faire advenir à sa conscience*"[71] (my emphasis). In a famous passage, IV.8 [6] 4.31–35, Plotinus himself speaks of this double self, or rather of this twofold condition of individual souls as "amphibious":[72]

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[66] Ferrari (1997, 38).

[67] Cf. Gerson (1994, 74).

[68] Cf. Aubry (2008). On Plotinus' complex use of the term ἡμεῖς, cf. Chapter 2 note 102.

[69] I borrow the expressions "ideal self" and "endowed self" from Gerson (1994, 139–151). One can also speak of a higher self and a lower self. In analogous ways, Trouillard (1955b, 17–19) speaks of "homme intelligible" and "homme empirique," while Aubry (2008, 273) distinguishes between "un concept ontologique et un concept éthique de l'individu."

> Souls, then, become, one might say, amphibious, compelled to live by turns the life There and the life here: those which are able to be more in the company of Intellect live the life There more, but those whose normal condition is, by nature or chance, the opposite, live more the life here below.

Thus, the purpose of the ascent is to bring the individual soul to identify with higher realities, or, through a gradual process of assimilation to these realities, to come to live "There" as a permanent citizen. And as we shall see, this process takes place as a reorientation or reeducation of the love naturally present in the soul.

Given what I have argued so far in this section, it should be clear that the subject of the ascent cannot be the Form of an individual, since this has its seat in the intelligible, and as such it permanently participates in the immutable *eros* of Intellect. What, then, is the subject of the ascent? That is, what ascends and thus undergoes some change in the process of reintegration to higher realities? At the beginning of this section I suggested that the subject of the ascent is the individual soul viewed as the bearer of the connatural *eros* ultimately directed to the One, and that for the soul the ascent is a gradual reformation of its love until this is actually and entirely directed toward the One.

It may be objected that this formulation of the answer is unnecessarily difficult, introducing specifications where little or none are needed. Thus, I shall first try to justify it by contrasting it with a more straightforward and familiar (but, as I shall argue, imprecise, even if not altogether incorrect) formulation, namely: The subject of the ascent is the human soul and only the human soul, that is, the individual or particular rational soul animating a human being. Lloyd, for instance, argues that this answer to our main question is true not only of Plotinus, but of the Neoplatonic tradition as a whole.[73] And Ousager cites *Enneads* I.3 [20] 1.1–18 as evidence of the fact that according to Plotinus only human souls can ascend.[74] We may immediately notice that this passage actually speaks of methods or practices of ascent for human souls and does not state explicitly that *only* human souls can ascend, but it would not seem unreasonable to conjecture that this is in fact what Plotinus has in mind. If so, it would follow that in Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy, neither what is below the soul animating a human being (i.e., in descending order, other animated bodies, those entities which are usually referred to as inanimate bodies, and pre-cosmic matter) nor what is above it (i.e., in ascending order, the World-Soul and other manifestations of soul in full control of their bodies, such as the souls animating the heavenly bodies, the unembodied Soul-Hypostasis, and Intellect) is capable of ascending to the One.

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[70] Cf. Tornau (2009, 334).

[71] Tornau (2009, 335).

[72] IV.8 [6] 4.31–35: Γίγνονται οὖν οἷον [32] ἀμφίβιοι ἐξ ἀνάγκης τόν τε ἐκεῖ βίον τόν τε ἐνταῦθα παρὰ [33] μέρος βιοῦσαι, πλεῖον μὲν τὸν ἐκεῖ, αἳ δύνανται πλεῖον τῷ [34] νῷ συνεῖναι, τὸν δὲ ἐνθάδε πλεῖον, αἷς τὸ ἐναντίον ἢ φύσει [35] ἢ τύχαις ὑπῆρξεν.

I think that an answer of this kind is not altogether incorrect; it is not, however, sufficiently precise. The reason for this is part of the interpretive difficulty concerning Plotinus' views on an issue closely related to the problem of the subject of the ascent, the traditional Platonic doctrine of reincarnation,[75] otherwise referred to as transmigration or metempsychosis, although Plotinus' term of choice is not μετεμψύχωσις, but rather μετενσωμάτωσις (II.9 [33] 6.13, IV.3 [27] 9.6; the verb μετενσωματοῦσθαι also is used at I.1 [53] 12.4, IV.3 [27] 9.5).[76] I stand with the majority of scholars in maintaining that Plotinus did not reject the doctrine of reincarnation nor did he interpret it metaphorically, but genuinley endorsed it and tried to integrate it in his philosophy.[77]

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[73] Lloyd (1990, 123–124).

[74] Ousager (2004, 33).

[75] See especially Plato, *Phaedo* 69e6–77d5, 80b8–82b9, 113d1–114c8, *Phaedrus* 248c2–249b6, *Meno* 81a5–c9, *Republic* X.614a5–621d3, *Timaeus* 42b3–d2, 90e1–92c3, *Laws* X.903d3–4, 904d4–905a1. For further references, see the critical apparatus in HS$_2$ for the passages cited at the end of this paragraph in the body of the text.

[76] See Stamatellos (2013, 50–54) for a discussion of this terminology and its sources.

[77] Scholars may be roughly divided in three rather uneven groups on the issue of reincarnation in Plotinus: (i) an overwhelming majority variously maintains that it is an integral part of his philosophy: e.g., Rich (1957), Rist (1963, 227; 1964, 108 note 199; 1967, 120), Blumenthal (1971, 95), ARMSTRONG (III, 146–147 note 1) commenting on III.4 [15] 3.2, Wallis (1995, 72, 79), Gerson (1994, 76–77, 209–210), Corrigan (2005, 80, 84), Stamatellos (2013), Emilsson (2017, 284), and several others; (ii) some think that while Plotinus mentions it, it does not play a relevant role in his thought: e.g., Inge (1928–1929, II, 33–34), referenced approvingly by Pistorius (1952, 98), and Smith (1984, 276); (iii) a thin minority denies that he endorses it at all: e.g., Mamo (1969, 93–95), Vassilopoulou (2006, 375).

One may try to infer his support of the doctrine from several passages, chief of which are the following: I.1 [53] 11–12, II.9 [33] 6.13, III.2 [47] 13.14–17, III.3 [48] 4.34–44, III.4 [15] 2, IV.3 [27] 8.50–60, 9.5–6, 25.1–5, IV.7 [2] 14.1–8, IV.8 [6] 1, V.7 [18] 1, VI.4 [22] 16, VI.7 [38] 6.21–7.16. It may be worth noting that the problem here is not whether Plotinus' system requires reincarnation in order to be coherent (it is not clear to me that it does), but rather whether the doctrine of reincarnation can be coherently accomodated in that system (and that, I think, it can).

The main problem for what I called an imprecise answer to the question about the identity of the subject of the ascent is not that of endorsing reincarnation as such, but rather of admitting the possibility of a special type of reincarnation, human-animal (and, one may assume, animal-human) reincarnation. This is the possibility that the individual soul animating a human being could, at a different time, come to animate a lower animal and even a plant—a possibility which Plotinus seems openly to entertain (e.g., at I.11 [53] 11–12, III.3 [48] 4.41–44, III.4 [15] 2.17–30, VI.7 [38] 6.21–23 and 33–36).[78] In fact, this possibility may be radicalized to include entities which one would typically consider inanimate, such as rocks and the four basic elements, if it is true, as some authors contend, that Plotinus upheld some form of panpsychism.[79] For example, at VI.7 [38] 11.44–45 he approvingly writes of Plato: "Plato says that there is a soul in each of these elements"[80] (see the whole of VI.7 [38] 11 for the extended argument in support of the animation of the elements;[81] cf. also III.2 [47] 3.25–31, IV.4 [28] 22, 27).

We might recall that according to the imprecise answer, Plotinus seems to exclude all sub-human manifestations of soul from being identified with the subject of the ascent. But if, as I maintain, Plotinus both takes the doctrine of reincarnation seriously and does not reject in principle the possibility that the soul which animates a human being might, at a different time, reincarnate into a form of life which ranks lower in his metaphysical hierarchy, to claim that the subject of the ascent is the individual *human* soul seems at least imprecise. I say

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[78] See Browning Cole (1992, especially 74–78).

[79] E.g., Gatti (1996, 157), Rappe (1999, 264); cf. Skrbina (2017, 49, 72). Notice that Plotinus (II.1 [40] 2.12–17) rejects the existence of a fifth element or body—aether (αἰθήρ)—posited by Aristotle (e.g., at *On the Heavens*, I.3.270b1–25); for a nuanced discussion of this problem, see Wilberding (2006, 21–34, 123–126).

[80] The text he has in mind seems to be *Epinomis* 981b–c and 984b–c (cf. HS$_1$, HS$_2$, ARMSTRONG, P. Hadot 1988, Faggin 2000, F. Fronterotta in Brisson and Pradeau 2002–2010, Gerson 2018); *Epinomis* 984c–d for Bréhier (1924–1938); *Epinomis* 981b for Beutler and Theiler (in Harder 1956–1971).

[81] Cf. P. Hadot (1988, 242–244) for a commentary.

“imprecise” rather than “erroneous” because while the possibility that an individual human soul may reincarnate in lower manifestations of life means that an individual ascent could begin at a level inferior to that of a human soul, it is not necessary that it begin at that level (in any event, it seems implausible that it could bypass the level of the human soul). Therefore, to claim that it is only the human soul that is capable of returning to the One is correct in the qualified sense that for any given embodied soul the ascent must begin *at least* at the level of human embodiment, and that *no* individual ascent *has* to begin from forms of life inferior to that level. Nevertheless, speaking unqualifiedly, it seems to me that the claim is imprecise since as I pointed out, Plotinus does not in principle deny the possibility of human-animal reincarnation, including the reincarnation into plants and, perhaps, even into so-called inanimate bodies.

Some clarifications are still in place even if we grant that Plotinus admits this possibility. First, my working hypothesis is that the subject of the ascent is the individual soul insofar as it is the bearer of the connatural *eros* directed to the One, and to ascend means for it gradually to reform its love until it is actually and wholly oriented toward the One. If this hypothesis is correct, one will concur that none of the faculties or powers characterizing an embodied manifestation of soul insofar as it can function in relation to, and not independently of, the body is itself the subject of the ascent. To exemplify: even if one concedes that, due to the possibility of reincarnation into lower forms of life, the process of an individual ascent may begin at the animal level, it is not the power of sensation of the animal that ascends or is reintegrated into higher realities; nor is it the power of vegetation or any other power which requires the body in order to function. In ascending, the soul sheds these powers, so to speak. What, then, is *not* shed? That is, what belongs to the soul essentially, such that if it were left behind, the soul could not ascend to the One (and in all likelihood it would cease to be an individual soul as Plotinus envisions it)? I suggest that it is *eros*, the soul’s connatural love which in the process of ascent is gradually reoriented but never cast off.

Two objections may be raised. First, one wonders in what sense this *eros* which is never cast off or left behind can seriously be conceived as one and the same inborn love as the soul moves through the different stages of the ascent, given that the objects of love at different stages are themselves different, as one will easily realize even through a cursory reading of *Enneads* I.6 [1] *On Beauty*. In reply to this objection, it may be observed that for the soul’s innate love to be the same love across different stages of the ascent, there is no need to be directed to the same particular desiderata; it is sufficient that it be directed toward various desiderata under the same aspect. This means that when the soul, not having yet reached the end of the ascent journey, loves inferior desiderata, it does so only insofar as these are good or display traces of the Good. In other words, the soul, whether it is aware of this or not, loves all these different desiderata *sub ratione boni*, as I argued in Chapter 4, although it may mistake them for the Good. To correct this misguided perspective is precisely what occurs in a successful ascent, as we shall see in the next chapter. Therefore, according to my suggestion, the soul's connatural love constitutes the *fil rouge* of the ascent and is essential to identify the individual soul as the subject of the ascent, even if the particular desiderata, to which love attaches itself, shift in the course of the ascent. Thus, to say that love is reformed in the course of the ascent does not mean that love's *essential* orientation changes (for after all, there is no love that is essentally directed to something evil: cf. Chapter 3 note 43), but rather that one's affective commitments are gradually reprioritized so as to be completely aligned with the fundamental direction indicated by the soul's connatural *eros*.

The second objection is that at least on its surface this allegedly more precise way of answering the question about the identity of the subject of the ascent does not seem very different from the other, imprecise, formulation. In reply to this, it must be said that the latter formulation lacks an element which is essential for identifying the subject of the ascent, namely, a precise reference to love. For if the subject of the ascent is simply taken to be the individual human soul (i.e., the individual *rational* soul), one may get the misleading impression that the ascent is *primarily* a rational affair. But if what I argued in Chapter 4 and in the previous section of this chapter is feasible, this cannot be the case. The ascent is *primarily* an erotic affair, a work of love performed on love, in the sense that it is on the basis of the love naturally present in the soul that the loving soul is capable of working on its very love and gradually reorient it toward that which alone is supremely and ultimately worth loving, the One which gave the soul its love (cf. VI.7 [38] 22.19).

With this in mind, there is still a sense in which, according to Plotinus, not any embodied soul whatsoever may be said to ascend, namely, insofar as it identifies with the activity that characterizes its specific relation to the body it animates. Thus, plants and animals, *insofar as they are plants and animals*, are incapable of ascending to the One simply because to be a plant and an animal means to identify with the activity that is most typical of a plant and of an animal. Whatever this activity might be, it requires a body and is performed for the sake of the maintenance of the ensouled body, and as we shall see in the last section of this chapter, to make one's concern with the body a priority is incompatible with advancement in the ascent.

To claim that animals and plants are incapable of ascending to the One does not amount to denying altogether that reason is to be found in them, despite the fact that Plotinus refers to them as non-rational or unreasoning (e.g., I.4 [46] 3.7, III.8 [30] 1.3, V.2 [11] 2.7). On the one hand, he recognizes fundamental differences among the respective manifestations of life in human beings, in animals, in plants, and, if he indeed espouses some form of panpsychism, in such things as mountains, lakes, clouds, and the elements. For example, at I.1 [53] 7.12–23 he seems to imply that the feature which distinguishes human beings from mere animals, including the mere animality which is part of the living human being, is the ability to contemplate forms alone while remaining impassive (line 14: εἰδῶν μόνων ἀπαθῶς […] θεωρίαν), to wit, the faculty of reason, or the rational soul (line 22: τῇ λογικῇ ψυχῇ). On the other hand, in other passages it appears that the gap between human beings and animals is significantly reduced in consideration of the fact that each rational soul contains all types of animal life. These types of life preexist in Intellect (cf. VI.7 [38] 8–14) and the individual soul can choose them as it takes on different bodies at different times (VI.7 [38] 6.21–7.16).[82] At III.8 [30] 1.1–8, speaking playfully (παίζοντες: line 1) but not without meaning it,[83] Plotinus entertains the idea, that all living things, not only the rational ones, "aspire to contemplation [θεωρίας ἐφίεσθαι], and direct their gaze to this end" (lines 2–3; see also III.8 [30] 1.18–24, 8.14–19).

If this reading is correct, individual plants and animals (and again, possibly, so-called inanimate entities) cannot be subjects of the ascent, not because they *altogether* lack reason, for being manifestations of souls, they do not, but rather because to be a plant and an animal means to have one's *eros* fully committed to the activities that characterize plants and animals respectively. In any case, even in regard to the soul animating a human being, what ascend is not that soul insofar as it is engaged in such embodied activities as vegetation or sensation, but rather insofar as it is capable of making its love independent of those activities and gradually redirecting its *eros* to the One until it is fully committed to it. In the language of love, a plant and an animal, for all we can tell, have not reoriented or purified their *eros* to the point where this has become βούλησις or rational desire consciously seeking the One (see my remarks in Section 4 of Chapter 3). As a consequence, their way of being, which is at the same time a way of loving, lacks the projection toward the assimilation to higher realities which is proper to a human being, that sensible mortal being which is animated by what is commonly referred to as a rational soul.

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[82] See P. Hadot (1988, 225–229).

[83] ARMSTRONG (III, 360–361 note 1) points out that while Plotinus' tone in this passage is humorous, he takes the doctrine he is introducing very seriously, suggesting that the reference to play is an echo of Plato, *Laws* IV.712b1–2 and VII.803c–d (he probably means 803c2–8). See also Corrigan (2005, 102–103), who thinks of *Republic* VII.536c1–2 and 537a1 as an even more likely background for this passage, adding some perceptive observations on the theme of play in Plato and Plotinus.

This is not a denial of the fact that plants and lower animals are oriented toward the One, since for Plotinus it is plain that all reality seeks the One (V.5 [32] 12.7–9, VI.5 [23] 1.11–12), as I argued early in Section 1 of Chapter 4. However, *insofar as they are plants and animals*, they desire it in an unreflective manner at their proper level of existence (i.e., vegetative life for plants, and vegetative plus sensitive life for lower animals), without being capable of reflectively rising above that level, for as Plotinus holds, everything seeks the One and tries to attain it, but only as far as its natural capacity allows (II.9 [33] 2.4, 9.50, VI.2 [43] 11.21 and 30, VI.4 [22] 8.38–40; cf. also II.9 [33] 3.3, III.2 [47] 3.31–33, VI.4 [22] 5.9–11, 11.3–7, 15.1–6, VI.5 [23] 11.29–30). In fact, not only does he maintain that participation occurs in accordance with the ability of any given thing, but also this is true of all participation of lower in higher reality (V.4 [7] 1.26—e.g., of soul in Intellect: I.8 [51] 2.20–21; of soul in the One: VI.7 [38] 31.6–7; of bodies in beauty through soul: I.6 [1] 6.30–32; cf. also II.9 [33] 9.46–50, 75–79, III.2 [47] 9.28–29, IV.8 [6] 6.16–20, V.3 [49] 7.3–4, V.6 [24] 6.35).[84] And as I mentioned above, for Plotinus assimilation to the One never occurs even for the human soul while this is *primarily* committed—that is to say, while its *eros* is primarily directed—to objects and activities that are at variance with the journey of ascent to it.

We may now resume our account of the entities to be considered for the title of "subject of the ascent." Moving in the direction of the process of derivation, after animals, plants, and so-called inanimate bodies, next (and last) in line is pre-cosmic matter. I pointed out that animals and plants do not seem to possess *eros* in the form of rational desire, or will (βούλησις), concluding that insofar as they are plants and animals, they essentially lack the possibility of assimilation to higher realities which is proper to an individual human soul. This is *a fortiori* true of lower matter, which *by itself* not only lacks any psychic manifestation, but is also utterly devoid of all erotic power of reversion toward higher realities.

Moving from the individual human soul in the direction opposite to the process of derivation, we find the World-Soul (and other manifestations of soul which are in complete control of the bodies they animate, such as the souls of the heavenly bodies) and the Soul-Hypostasis. Their cases are different from the ones we have analyzed so far, since neither is descended, fallen, or otherwise incapable of being in full control of the body entrusted to their care: the Soul-Hypostasis, because it is thoroughly disembodied and never turned toward the sensible; the World-Soul, because while itself a particular embodied soul caring for the world's body, it remains in full control of the body to which it is permanently united,[85] as we saw in my summary discussion of the hypostasis soul in Chapter 2. In both cases, their *eros* is constantly directed toward the noetic realm, and so for them there is no ascent understood as the possibility of an active transformation or assimilation into a higher hypostasis.[86] As for Intellect, not only did it never "descend," but the self-contained immutability that is proper to its nature, along with the fulfilled character of its love, seem to be intrinsically at variance with the concept of ascent (cf. IV.7 [2] 13.2–4, IV.3 [27] 13.22–23). In other words, Intellect, in order to be Intellect, ought to be such a determined entity, immutable in its kind: fulfilled desire that never loses touch with its desideratum. In different ways, this is also true of lower matter, of bodies, of the World-Soul, and of the Soul-Hypostasis, in the sense that none of them could leave its proper level of reality without ceasing to be the kind of thing it is.

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[84] For a treatment of the Plotinian axiom that each thing receives whatever is capable of receiving (or that each thing participates in something according to its capability), see Pradeau (2003, 89–96).

By contrast, the individual soul can be conceived of as a fluid entity, one which, in virtue of its *eros*, is capable of moving across the hierarchical layers of Plotinus' metaphysics while maintaining its proper nature, that is, without becoming something other than an individual soul.[87] Thus, an individual soul does not cease to be what it is when it is engaged in the information of the body to which it is united; likewise, it is still an individual soul when it becomes reintegrated into the realm of Intellect; and as I will argue in my discussion of union in Subsection 3.1 of Chapter 6, it will still be an individual soul even if it will have succeeded in moving beyond Intellect to be erotically assimilated to the One, the end of its striving and the universal End. In short, none of the entities that we encounter in the Plotinian universe can ascend (in the strong sense of becoming assimilated to the One) and still be the kind of thing it is, except an individual soul.[88]

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[85] This applies also to the souls of the gods.

[86] Thus, I take it that the term ἀναβαίνουσα (ascending) used at IV.7 [2] 12.8 in reference to the World-Soul (and the human soul) does not have the quasi-technical sense of ascent as gradual assimilation to the One, but simply means the ability to envisage the One as Principle and to be connected to it.

[87] A question may be raised about the fact that the World-Soul, like individual human souls (and being itself an individual soul: see Wolters 1984, 124), has a higher part (i.e., its intellect, represented by Zeus, as I argued in Chapter 3). If the individual human soul can be reintegrated into its higher part, why is this not possible also for the World-Soul? I think the basic answer to this question is that if the World-Soul were to retreat completely from the sensible universe, this would remain soulless, devoid of Providence (the topic of treatises III.2 [47] and III.3 [48]). Thus, as we saw in Chapter 2, the specific *eros* of the World-Soul necessarily includes the care and information of the sensible universe (cf. III.7 [45] 12, 13.29–30, IV.8 [6] 7.23–32).

3 The Terminology of Ascent and the Role of the One in the Ascent

Plotinus uses several expressions to speak of the soul's process of identification with its highest element leading to union with the One. Among the most frequently used terms are "ascent" (ἀναγωγή,[89] ἀνάβασις,[90] ἄνοδος[91]), "return" (ἐπανέρχεσθαι, ἐπανιέναι),[92] "escape" or "flight" (φυγή[93]), and "reversion" or "conversion" (ἐπιστροφή[94]). As a quick look at Sleeman and Pollet's *Lexicon Plotinianum* will confirm, in none of my references listed in the relevant footnotes are these terms used strictly or technically to indicate the soul's process of assimilation to the One, what I have otherwise been referring to with the expression "ascent." Instead, these terms are borrowed from ordinary language and used metaphorically to express an experience of a different order.

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[88] Lloyd (1990, 125), speaking specifically of human soul rather than generally of individual soul, argues that while Neoplatonists had no full answer to the question why the human soul has "this apparently unique privilege," they believed in this privilege on the basis of personal experience.

[89] On ἀναγωγή, see I.3 [20] 1.5, 18, V.5 [32] 4.1, V.7 [18] 1.2. See also ἀνάγειν, in the sense of both ascending (I.3 [20] 1.2, 6, 10, I.6 [1] 6.16, V.1 [10] 1.24; cf. also IV.4 [28] 5.10, V.1 [10] 6.8, V.3 [49] 8.46, VI.5 [23] 7.1) and returning, going back, retiring (I.6 [1] 9.7); and ἐπανάγειν in the sense of lifting up (VI.9 [9] 3.18).

[90] On ἀνάβασις, see I.6 [1] 7.8, II.9 [33] 6.8. See also ἀναβαίνειν: I.3 [20] 1.13, 2.12, I.6 [1] 4.2, 7.1 and 4, 9.24 and 34, III.8 [30] 8.1, IV.4 [28] 5.11, IV.7 [2] 10.39, IV.8 [6] 4.29, V.1 [10] 3.3, 4.6, V.3 [49] 9.30 and 34, 17.6, V.9 [5] 3.25, VI.5 [23] 7.2, VI.8 [39] 7.7, 9.35, 15.21, VI.9 [9] 3.21, 4.21 and 23, 11.10; ἐπανάβασις: VI.7 [38] 27.25; ἐπαναβαίνειν: V.9 [5] 2.7, VI.7 [38] 28.21.

[91] On ἄνοδος, see IV.8 [6] 1.35 (an echo of the ascent from the cave of Plato's *Republic* VII). See also ἀνιέναι (-εἶμι, *ibo*): I.1 [53] 13.8 (cf. I.6 [1] 7.6, III.1 [3] 2.4).

[92] On ἐπανέρχεσθαι, see II.9 [33] 4.12; ἐπανιέναι (-εἶμι, *ibo*): III.8 [30] 6.35, V.5 [32] 5.1.

[93] On φυγή, see I.2 [19] 1.3, 3.6, I.6 [1] 8.17 and 22, I.8 [51] 6.10, VI.9 [9] 11.51. See also φεύγειν: I.2 [19] 1.2–3, I.6 [1] 6.8, 8.8 and 16, I.8 [51] 6.9 and 12 (cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 176a8–b3, *Phaedo* 67b7–c3; the same Platonic passages are alluded to at II.3 [52] 9.20, II.9 [33] 6.40–41, and III.4 [15] 2.12), I.8 [51] 8.29, IV.3 [27] 32.19, IV.8 [6] 5.27, VI.7 [38] 28.27; ἀποφυγή: I.8 [51] 5.29 (cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 107d1); ἀναφεύγειν: V.9 [5] 2.5; ἐκφεύγειν: I.8 [51] 7.12.

[94] On ἐπιστροφή in the sense of conversion in the context of the ascent (as distinguised from the sense conveyed by the Principle of Reversion introduced in Chapter 2 and on which I will return presently), see I.2 [19] 4.18, IV.8 [6] 4.2, 7.26, V.8 [31] 11.9. See also ἐπιστρέφειν: I.2 [19] 4.16–17, I.6 [1] 7.5, IV.4 [28] 2.27, IV.8 [6] 4.28 (an allusion to the cave of Book VII of Plato's *Republic*), V.1 [10] 1.23, VI.7 [38] 31.6, VI.9 [9] 2.35–36, 7.17; στροφή: I.2 [19] 6.25; στρέφειν: I.6 [1] 7.39, III.4 [15] 4.2, IV.4 [28] 2.27, V.8 [31] 10.7, 11.9, VI.9 [9] 11.15; ἀναστρέφειν: III.5 [50] 3.35.

I believe that these metaphors, with the exception of the last one (ἐπιστροφή), are not particularly hard to clarify if one bears in mind the broader framework of Plotinian metaphysics. Thus, the upward movement indicated by the terms for "ascent" can be explained as being very closely dependent on what Plotinus takes to be the superiority (with respect to unity, being, power, self-determination, love, and overall perfection) of the hypostases of Intellect and the One in comparison with soul.[95] Similarly, the idea of "return" is conceptually implied by the fact that in the *Enneads* and through the Neoplatonic tradition the endpoint of the ascent is identical with the source or origin of all reality, so that for the soul to become assimilated to the One may be understood as a sort of homecoming, a purifying journey leading the traveling soul to a final destination which is at the same time its true origin: a journey back to what Plotinus calls its beloved fatherland or native country (πατρίς).[96]

As for the concept of escape or flight, the focus of the metaphor shifts without changing its overall meaning and purpose: from the Good as that *toward which* the individual soul proceeds, to the lower involvements *from which* the same soul moves away in order to become assimilated to the Principle. We should also notice that in the *Enneads* metaphors of escape are conceptually and terminologically related to expressions indicating death, such as withdrawal (ἐξάγειν; ἐξαγωγή), leaving, or exit (ἐξέρχεσθαι; ἐξιέναι; ἔξοδος),[97] although the death signified in these expressions should not be understood literally.

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[95] Plato's use of similar language in the *Symposium* and elsewhere is a likely source of inspiration on this point for Plotinus. The dialogue begins with what may be an allusion to the final ascent to Beauty (*Symposium* 172a2–3, my translation: "…the other day I happened to go up [ἀνιὼν] to town from my home in Phalerum…"), and words of ascent, most notably ἐπάνειμι (-εἶμι, *ibo*), occur repeatedly in the brief synoptic view of the so-called ladder of love of *Symposium* 211b7–d1, which I will discuss in the next section, and in its brief preamble at 211b5–7: 211b6 (ἐπανιὼν), 211c2 (ἐπανιέναι), 211c3 (ἐπαναβασμοῖς). And as Rettig (1875, 309), Hug (1884, 162), and Bury (1932, 130) all point out in their notes to this passage, there are relevant parallels between the language and thought of ascent of *Symposium* 211b7–d1 and that of *Republic* VI and VII, in particular VI.510b4–511c2, VII.517b5 (ἄνοδον), 521c7 (ἐπάνοδον), 531c3 (ἀνίασιν), 532b8 (ἐπάνοδος), 532d5 (ἐπανιτέον).

[96] See I.6 [1] 8.16 (an echo of Homer, *Iliad* II.140) and 21, V.9 [5] 1.21. Patently the theme of return to one's native country, the *fil rouge* of Homer's second epic poem, is a perfectly familiar one for someone deeply steeped in the Greek tradition like Plotinus. References to the *Odyssey* in relation to this theme are explicit in the *Enneads* (i.e., *Odyssey* IX.29 and X.483–484 at *Enneads* I.6 [1] 8.17–20, and *Odyssey* V.37 at *Enneads* V.9 [5] 1.21). The notion of return to one's native land clearly squares well also with the metaphorical description of the One as Father (e.g., I.6 [1] 8.21, V.5 [32] 12.37, V.8 [31] 13.5, VI.8 [39] 14.38, VI.9 [9] 9.34; cf. also V.1 [10] 6.50–53).

[97] Withdrawal: ἐξάγειν (I.9 [16] 1.1 and 19, IV.4 [28] 44.24), ἐξαγωγή (I.9 [16] 1.14). Leaving, or exit: ἐξέρχεσθαι (I.8 [51] 13.23, I.9 [16] 1.1–2, III.4 [15] 2.11, IV.3 [27] 18.2, 24.1, 25.2, 27.21, 31.17,

More importantly, in the context of the metaphor of escape we should clearly determine the identity of that which is to be left behind in the flight. What is that the individual soul should flee in its journey to the One? The answer to this question is at the same time a statement of Plotinus' view about the sensible world in connection with the ascent. If Plotinus is saying that it is the sensible as such that ought to be fled, his position will be no different from the radical dualism, both cosmological and anthropological, ordinarily attributed to certain Gnostics.[98] If, on the other hand, it is not the sensible qua sensible that constitutes a problem in the perspective of the ascent, from what exactly should the soul escape? Plotinus answers this question unambiguously at I.8 [51] 6.9–13, a passage that contains a sequence of echoes from Plato's *Theaetetus* 176a8–b3:[99]

> But when he [i.e., Plato] says that "we must take flight from thence" he is no longer referring to life on earth. For "flight," he says, is not going away from earth but being on earth "just and holy with the help of wisdom"; what he means is that we must fly from wickedness; so evil for him is wickedness and all that comes from wickedness…

As Plotinus points out in the sequel of this passage and as we shall see more explicitly in my discussion of purification in the next chapter, flight from wickedness is possible through virtue (ἀρετή), by which the soul begins to regain access to its original nature by becoming able to master lower matter and its negative influence (cf. I.8 [51] 6.19–20, II.9 [33] 18.1–17). In this context, it is not necessary to take separation of soul from body in a literal sense, as death, much like the expressions for death I pointed out above need not be read as signifying actual death. Thus, at I.8 [51] 13.14–25 the condition of vice (κακία) is metaphorically called the death of the soul, not in the sense that the soul ceases to exist altogether in the way the composite ceases to exist in literal death, but in the sense that it "has changed to another nature, a worse one" (ἑτέραν φύσιν τὴν χείρω ἠλλάξατο: I.8 [51] 13.19–20). Thus, separation should be understood chiefly

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IV.4 [28] 29.2; cf. also II.9 [33] 18.10, VI.9 [9] 9.53, 10.1), ἐξιέναι, -εἶμι, *ibo* (I.9 [16] 1.1 and 17), ἔξοδος (I.9 [16] 1.15; cf. also III.2 [47] 15.26).

[98] See for instance *Corpus Hermeticum* IV.5–6; *Nag Hammadi Library* II.5.97.24–98.9. For a concise account of Gnostic cosmological and anthropological dualism see Rudolph (1987, 59–67, 88–94).

[99] I.8 [51] 6.9–13: Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐντεῦθεν φεύγειν δεῖ οὐκέτι περὶ [10] τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς λέγεται. Φυγὴ γάρ, φησιν, οὐ τὸ ἐκ γῆς ἀπελθεῖν, [11] ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄντα ἐπὶ γῆς δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον εἶναι μετὰ [12] φρονήσεως, ὡς εἶναι τὸ λεγόμενον φεύγειν κακίαν δεῖν, [13] ὥστε τὰ κακὰ αὐτῷ ἡ κακία καὶ ὅσα ἐκ κακίας.

as refusing to consider one's commitment to the body a primary concern (cf. V.1 [10] 1.22–29, VI.5 [23] 12.27–29).[100] It follows that the sensible world is not itself evil (see III.2 [47] 3, II.9 [33] 8–9); in fact, since the sensible is a hylomorphic entity, it still belongs somehow to the intelligible, even if in a highly qualified way.

But as I anticipated, if the metaphors used thus far to illustrate the process of assimilation to the One—ascent, return, flight—have been relatively easy to explain, the same cannot be said of the image of conversion. The difficulty is due mainly to the ambiguous use of the term ἐπιστροφή, and in particular to the fact that Plotinus expresses one of his most characteristic doctrines by means of the same term. This doctrine is well summarized in what I referred to as the Principle of Reversion, introduced in Chapter 2. Broadly, the principle states that every hypostasis (with the exception of the One, which is ungenerated: cf. V.4 [7] 1.18–19) emerges, or establishes its identity, as that particular hypostasis through a process of self-reversion which is at the same time a reversion toward its generator. If I was right to claim that for Plotinus the subject of the ascent is the individual soul as the bearer of the connatural love ultimately directed to the One, the meaning of ἐπιστροφή which is at work in the ascent cannot be that of the double movement (i.e., self-reversion and the reversion toward its generator) of a hypostasis that is expressed in the Principle of Reversion. What the term means in the context of the ascent is rather a turning of the individual soul's attention from lower commitments to higher realities, in order to be able to identify as much as possible with its best part. In this sense, the movement of conversion is at the same time an inner turn toward oneself. But as we saw, this can never be the case for Intellect and the Soul-Hypostasis (as well as the World-Soul and other manifestations of soul in full control of their bodies). For this reason in Chapter 2 I used the term "reversion" to express the former meaning of ἐπιστροφή, that is, ἐπιστροφή as the movement whereby Intellect and Soul emerge as full hypostases by erotically turning upon themselves and toward their respective generator. I now reserve the term "conversion" to convey the latter meaning, namely, ἐπιστροφή as the movement whereby the individual soul turns from lower commitments to reintegration in its higher part.

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[100] Something along the same lines may be said about the idea of the body as tomb of the soul (Plotinus IV.8 [6] 1.27–36, 3.1–5, 4.25–28; cf. VP 22.45), well captured in the formula σῶμα-σῆμα, of likely Orphic and Pythagorean descent (cf. Kahn 2001, 19–22). The idea is well attested in Plato (*Cratylus* 400c1–4, *Gorgias* 493a2–3; cf. also *Phaedo* 82d9–83a1 and 114b6–c2, *Phaedrus* 250c5–6) and became a common place in antiquity (cf. for example Virgil, *Aeneid* VI.734; Philo, *De specialibus legibus* IV.188; Augustine, *Contra Academicos* I.3.9). For a helpful treatment of the σῶμα-σῆμα formula in Plato, Plotinus, and early Christian writers, see de Vogel (1981).

Lloyd observes that "for practical purposes writers [i.e., Neoplatonists] often saw no need to distinguish reversion from the general notion of ascent to the One."[101] This seems to be the case in several of the post-Plotinian texts I cited in Chapter 2 note 26. But Lloyd also qualifies the term "ascent" in his claim as a "general notion." The Neoplatonists, Plotinus included, did not fail conceptually to distinguish this "general notion of ascent" from the ascent technically understood as the process of assimilation of the individual soul to the One. So, I take it that the ascent of which Lloyd speaks means the (non-temporal) event whereby a given hypostasis gains its identity, or becomes that particular hypostasis. Such an "ascent," or reversion, is unthinkable without the other two phases, rest and procession, with which it constitutes a single whole. As such, it is not to be conflated with the ascent of the individual soul, which by returning to the One does not constitute itself as a different kind of entity, or a hypostasis, but deliberately "moves" to, or becomes integrated into, a higher level of existence while remaining the kind of thing it already was.

There is another important difference between the two "ascents," or between what I have technically referred to as "reversion" and "conversion" respectively: the former occurs of necessity; the latter does not, not only in the sense that consciousness, deliberation and choice are needed for it to happen, but also in the more fundamental sense that it may not happen at all.[102] This disheartening possibility is explicitly recognized by Plotinus at 1.8 [51] 5.29–30, where he writes: "there is 'an escape from the evils in the soul' for those who are capable of it, though not all men are" (εἶναι μὲν ἀποφυγὴν κακῶν τῶν ἐν ψυχῇ τοῖς δυνηθεῖσι, πάντας δὲ οὐ δύνασθαι[103]). I interpret the clause πάντας δὲ οὐ δύνασθαι on line 30 to mean, not that the possibility of escape and eventually of union with the One is in principle unavailable to some people, but that not all are successful (see IV.3 [27] 6.25–34; cf. III.2 [47] 4.29–36, III.3 [48] 4.4–24) despite the fact that the possibility is available to all (see IV.8 [6] 4.30–31, VI.9 [9] 7.27–28; cf. V.1 [10] 12.1–3, V.5 [32] 12.11–14, 33–34).

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[101] Lloyd (1990, 128).

[102] In his discussion of the ambiguity of ἐπιστροφή in Neoplatonism, Lloyd (1990, 126–127) distinguishes the ordinary meaning of the term—"being turned toward"—from the more technical double meaning which it acquired in the Neoplatonic tradition and is the ground of its ambiguity, namely: (i) self-turning (which is what seems to be involved in the ascent: what I referred to as "conversion") and (ii) turning toward one's source (which is what takes place in the generation of a given hypostasis: what I referred to as "reversion"). My insistence on the difference of these two technical meanings is not be read as a misrecognition of how they are deeply realated in Neoplatonism, if only for the fact that self-turning is at the same time a turning toward one's source. Nevertheless, the difference of these two meanings ought to be born in mind, for it does denote two different events. For a treatment of the history and meaning of the expression ἐπιστροφὴ πρὸς ἑαυτόν, see Gerson (1997); cf. also Aubin (1963, 161–179), P. Hadot (1968, 1, 319 -330).

[103] The reference within the reference at 1.8 [51] 5.29 is to Plato, *Phaedo* 107d1.

This possibility of failure is grounded in the fact that according to Plotinus the ascent of any given soul to the One is the exclusive work of that particular soul. True enough, other souls and various circumstances may be more or less favorable to the success of the journey of return, but besides this, there does not seem to be anything ontologically superior to the soul which may help it in following the path to the Principle indicated by its connatural *eros*. In short, each individual soul is ultimately responsible for its own success or failure on the ascent journey. Thus, modern scholars have often remarked that the Plotinian Good, for all its goodness, does not provide the kind of assistance and proximity in the journey that one may find, say, in the Christian notion of grace, but also in most of the major Neoplatonists after Plotinus. For example, in his introduction to the revised MacKenna translation of the *Enneads*, Henry argues that the goal of the individual soul is to gain awareness of what it already is most intimately, and that this "latent actuality of salvation and the cold transcendence of God make it impossible […] to conceive of any genuine doctrine of grace."[104] Arnou, on his part, writes that "rien n'est plus opposé à la pensée de Plotin que la notion de grâce prévenante."[105] Rist's formulation is also uncompromising: "the return of the soul is dependent on nothing but itself."[106] And Armstrong, in a comment to VP 23.18–21, writes: "Note that Porphyry attributes his master's achievement predominantly to divine inspiration and guidance. This has little support from the *Enneads*. Plotinus normally thinks that the philosopher can attain to the divine level without this sort of special assistance."[107]

While these observations highlight an important feature of Plotinus' thought which differentiates it from other traditions and from the views of most of the Neoplatonists after him, one wonders whether in his metaphysics the soul is really left entirely to its own means in the journey of return to the One. Is the soul thrown into the word and abandoned to its own destiny? Does the One provide no help to the soul eager to be united with it? Perhaps Plotinus' position is not as uncompromising as it has been presented. Bussanich, speaking of statements in which Plotinus emphasizes the power of the One to lift the soul to itself, laments “a tendency among some Plotinian scholars to ignore such statements or downplay their significance.”[108] Thus, Plotinus writes that in its natural love for the One and upward movement toward it, the soul is lifted by the One itself (e.g., VI.7 [38] 22.18–19 and 35.39–40), which he calls “the giver of its [i.e., the soul’s] love” (τοῦ δόντος τὸν ἔρωτα: VI.7 [38] 22.19). Or again, at VI.7 [38] 31.17–18, the soul is said to love the Good “moved by it from the beginning” (αὐτοῦ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τὸ ἐρᾶν κινηθεῖσα: line 18). These statements, of course, are not meant to imply that the One intervenes directly to cause or even facilitate the conversion of the soul. Instead, they seem to suggest that some factor or other is already present to or in the soul as some kind of implicit assistance in its return journey, a factor which makes the possibility of its ascent to the One more than a mere matter of chance. On a page that may well sum up the meaning of these passages, P. Hadot writes:[109]

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[104] Henry, in MacKenna and Page (1969, xxxvii).

[105] Arnou (1967, 229). Commenting on Arnou, Andolfo (1999, 634–635) emphasizes the same idea.

[106] Rist (1967, 163); cf. also Bussanich (1994, 5327) commenting on Rist (1967, 225).

[107] ARMSTRONG (I, 71 note 1). See further references in Wallis (1995, 70–72); cf. also Beierwaltes (1981, 69–70), Reale (2004, VIII, 38, 185–186).

> What Plotinus calls the Good is thus, at the same time, that which, by bestowing grace, gives rise to love, and that which, by awakening love, causes grace to appear. The Good is what all things desire; it is what is desirable in an absolute sense. We asserted that love and grace are unjustified; likewise, the Good is absolutely unjustified. It is not random or accidental, but by willing itself and being what it wants to be [cf. *Enneads* VI.8 [39] 15.9–10], it freely creates the love that beings feel for it, as well as the grace they receive from it.

Naturally, Hadot’s use of the term “grace” here is to be conceptually distinguished from the one found in Christianity. Nonetheless, his view (and, more importantly, the passages from the *Enneads* I just referenced above) does indicate that there is something in Plotinus which may function as a distant analogue of, or loose substitute for, the broad notion of grace. Three such factors may be pointed out. The first is the so-called generosity of the One, precisely expressed in the Principle of Superabundance and well captured by the later dictum, *bonum diffusivum sui*. The second is the Principle of Henologic Giving as I presented it in Chapter 2, namely, the the idea that what the One gives to that which derives from it is a love always already directed toward the One as Good and as other than the recipient of this love. Finally, there is the notion of an undescended part of the soul permanently in contact with higher realities. Taken together, these three factors are the very work of the One in the form of natural endowments, rather than direct interventions, by which the individual soul is put in a position to succeed in its effort to return to its source. Thus, Hadot claims that what causes the soul to love a beautiful object is not the object as such, but an unjustified surplus: "grace, or Life in its deepest mystery," which for Plotinus is the very trace of the Good, its gratuitousness or self-diffusiveness.[110] It follows that the One, far from being a distant and uninvolved source, is precisely what is most intimate to the soul (see *Enneads* VI.9 [9] 7), so that it would seem unnecessary, in the context of Plotinus' metaphysics, to expect of it a greater involvement in the soul's journey of return.

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[108] Bussanich (1988, 199).

[109] P. Hadot (1993, 50–51).

The main question, however, is whether the three factors I just mentioned, while clear indexes of the self-diffusiveness of goodness displaying itself in the hypostatic unfolding of reality, are *sufficient* auxiliaries in the opposite movement, that which through purification and assimilation to Intellect leads the individual soul to union. From a perspective which emphasizes the pervasiveness of sin, it is obvious that they cannot be, and therefore the direct intervention of grace is needed as a necessary supplement. For Plotinus probably they are, but as we saw, at the same time he is well aware that not all souls are capable of making their way back to the One (see I.8 [51] 5.29–30), and that it is the very desire for good that "often involves the fall into evil" (see III.5 [50] 1.64–65). In light of this remark, one may see why after Plotinus the major representatives of Neoplatonism (most notably Porphyry, and later Iamblichus and Proclus), while still fully committed to cultivate the theoretical side of philosophy, turned resolutely to theurgical practice as the privileged means to union or salvation.[111]

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the possibility to ascend to the One is in principle open to all individual souls. And as we saw in Chapter 3, this possibility is essentially rooted in the very *eros* that belongs to each soul. Those souls who succeed in the ascent direct their *eros* to higher realities, while those who fail to ascend are not deprived of all *eros*, but merely decide (at times against their better judgment, other times out of habit, other times still merely due to ignorance) to invest the *eros* with which they have been naturally endowed in lower manifestations of higher realities, rather than direct it toward that of which these are manifestations: Soul, Intellect, and the One.

The wide spectrum of love I just indicated brings me to our next topic: *eros* as the force which in Plotinus' metaphysics regulates all movement of ascent to the One.

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[110] P. Hadot (1993, 50).

[111] Cf. Wallis (1995, 105–110, 120–123, 152–155).

4 *Eros* as the Fundamental Force Regulating All Movement of Ascent to the One Contrasted with Hypostatic *Eros* and *Eros* as a Method of Ascent

Eros—love—is a complex phenomenon, and a proper grasp of the articulation of its internal divisions is indispensable for a correct understanding of its role in the dynamics of the ascent. As we saw in my discussion of the treatise on *eros* (III.5 [50]) in Chapter 3, Plotinus provides a threefold classification of the phenomenon of love as pure, mixed, and deviant. Here I would like to focus on a different and complementary classification of the same phenomenon. This classification is also threefold, comprising the following three types of *eros*: hypostatic *eros*, *eros* as a method of ascent, and the connatural or inborn *eros* that regulates all movement of ascent to the One.

First, a word on what I called "hypostatic *eros*." The context of this distinction is that of the procession or derivation of all reality from the One presented in Chapter 2. In short, hypostatic *eros* is the love that each hypostasis naturally and immediately bears proximately for its generator, and ultimately for the One, which in turn is the very source of that hypostasis and of all love. This distinction is important insofar as it reminds us that the very formation or structuring of the Plotinian universe can be understood in terms of love and as a result of love, or a work of love (the general thesis of Part 1, defended chiefly in Chapter 2), and that the One as the universal source of this love is only conceptually distinct from the One qua Good, the universal desideratum or final cause discussed in Chapter 4. To avoid confusion, let us again note that this sense of "hypostatic" as referred to *eros* is different from that of the same adjective used in Section 4 of Chapter 3, where "hypostatic" was used to denote the status of *eros* as a *hypostasis* or *ousia*, and thus the *eros* which belongs essentially or connaturally to the soul (cf. Chapter 3 note 80).

More relevant for our present discussion of the ascent are the next two distinctions and what differentiates them. In the second distinction *eros* is understood as a method of ascent. This view of *eros* is found in the relatively short treatise *On dialectic*, I.3 [20],[112] in which Plotinus outlines three arts, methods or practices (τέχνη ἢ μέθοδος ἢ ἐπιτήδευσις: I.3 [20] 1.1) of ascent, namely, music, *eros*, and dialectic (or philosophy).[113] Strictly, however, there is only one ascent and the three “methods” are in fact practices that seem to apply to two different stages of the same journey. Thus, at I.3 [20] 1.12–18 Plotinus writes about these stages and the souls engaged in the journey:[114]

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[112] For a guided overview of treatise I.3 [20] see Catapano (1995, 163–179).

[113] A twofold method of ascent—through *eros* and through dialectic—can also be detected in Plato, the former in the *Symposium* (especially Socrates' speech and, in it, 209e5–212a7), and the latter in the *Republic* (especially books VI and VII; see Robin 1964, 184–187; cf. also Plato, *Philebus* 64c5–67a16, *Gorgias* 507e6–508a8). The harmony of the two methods in Plato is documented in the oral teaching at the Academy, and, as I am presently arguing,

> There are two stages of the journey for all, one when they are going up and one when they have arrived above. The first leads from the regions below, the second is for those who are already in the intelligible realm and , as it were, have left their tracks There, but must still travel till they reach the furthest point of the region, that is the “end of the journey,”[115] when you reach the top of the intelligible.

Accordingly, in his commentary to *Ennead* I.3 [20], Jankélévitch rightly speaks of an inferior and a superior dialectic.[116] According to this view, inferior dialectic includes both music and *eros*, while superior dialectic is identical with dialectic proper, or philosophy. Plotinus sketches the differences between these three arts or methods of ascent through a summary description of their practitioners: the musician (ὁ μουσικός), the lover (ὁ ἐρωτικός), and the philosopher (ὁ φιλόσοφος).

The musician is described as “easily moved and excited by beauty, but not quite capable of being moved by absolute beauty [i.e., Beauty itself]” (I.3 [20] 1.21–23),[117] so that “he must be led and taught to make abstraction of the

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is an object of reflection for Plotinus as well. This interpretation of Plato obviously reflects two of the distinctions drawn by Plotinus in I.3 [20]. As for the third method or distinction (i.e., music), Plato in several places (chiefly *Philebus* 65a1–5, but cf. also *Timaeus* 69b2–5, 87c4–d8) seems to allude to an ascent to the Good under the aspect of Measure (μετριότης) or Proportion (συμμετρία), which here can be viewed as the regulative concept of music (cf. Jankélévitch 1998, 34–40). Thus, according to this view, already in Plato the Good seems to have three, rather than two, principal aspects, that is, not only Truth and Beauty—the regulative aspects of dialectic and *eros* respectively—but also Measure or Proportion (see Robin 1964, 183–186, 189; cf. Gadamer 1986, 114–118). Plotinus may have all this in mind when he speaks of three starting points from which one can undertake the ascent to the One (i.e., music, love, and philosophy), although he subordinates music to both love and philosophy (I.3 [20] 1–3).

[114] I.3 [20] 1.12–18: Ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἡ πορεία διττὴ πᾶσιν [13] ἢ ἀναβαίνουσιν ἢ ἄνω ἐλθοῦσιν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ προτέρα ἀπὸ [14] τῶν κάτω, ἡ δέ γε δευτέρα, οἷς ἤδη ἐν τῷ νοητῷ [15] γενομένοις καὶ οἷον ἴχνος θεῖσιν ἐκεῖ πορεύεσθαι ἀνάγκη, ἕως [16] ἂν εἰς τὸ ἔσχατον τοῦ τόπου ἀφίκωνται, ὃ δὴ τέλος τῆς [17] πορείας ὂν τυγχάνει, ὅταν τις ἐπ’ ἄκρῳ γένηται τῷ [18] νοητῷ. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, minimally modified.

[115] An echo of Plato, *Republic* VII.532e3. ARMSTRONG (I, 153 note 2) comments: “The ‘end of the journey’ is the vision of the Good.”

[116] Jankélévitch (1998, 27–50 for inferior dialectic, and 51–111 for superior dialectic).

[117] I.3 [20] 1.21–23: Θετέον δὴ αὐτὸν εὐκίνητον καὶ [22] ἐπτοημένον μὲν πρὸς τὸ καλόν, ἀδυνατώτερον δὲ παρ’ αὐτοῦ [23] κινεῖσθαι.

material element [χωρίζοντα τὴν ὕλην]" (I.3 [20] 1.29) found in sounds, rhythms, and forms (i.e., images of Beauty to which he is inclined and ready to respond) in order to be able to grasp "the principles from which their proportions and ordering forces [αἱ ἀναλογίαι καὶ οἱ λόγοι] derive" (I.3 [20] 1.30) and "the beauty which is in these principles" (I.3 [20] 1.30–31). Here it seems plausible to draw a loose parallel between music as a method described in I.3 [20] 1.19–35 and the *eros* without recollection (whether pure or mixed) presented in the treatise on *eros*, III.5 [50], treated in Chapter 3.

In addition to the inclination toward beautiful things proper to the musician, the lover "has a kind of memory of beauty" (μνημονικός ἐστί πως κάλλους: I.3 [20] 2.2–3). However, adds Plotinus, the lover is unable to "grasp it in separateness, but he is overwhelmingly amazed and excited by visible beauties" (I.3 [20] 2.3–4).[118] The lover's goal is obviously to become capable to see Beauty by itself. Here, too, a parallel may be drawn between love as a method described in I.3 [20] 2 and the *eros* with recollection (whether pure or mixed) treated in my discussion of III.5 [50] in Chapter 3.

Plotinus' description of the way in which the lover may reach his goal, given in the second chapter of I.3 [20], is clearly patterned after the so-called Greater Mysteries of love of Plato's *Symposium* 209e5–212a7, especially the synoptic view of the ladder of love at 211b7–d1. Here is my proposed division of the ascent to Beauty in levels or rungs from this passage of the *Symposium*:[119]

(1.a) A single body: ἕν σῶμα (210a4–8, 211c3)
(1.b) All bodies: πάντα σώματα (210a8–b6, 211c3–4)
(2.a) Souls: ψυχαί (210b6–c3)
(2.b) Practices and laws: ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ νόμοι (210c3–6, 211c4–5)
(3.a) Kinds of knowledge, studies: ἐπιστῆμαι (210c6–d6), μαθήματα (211c5–6)

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118 I.3 [20] 2.3–4: χωρὶς δὲ ὂν ἀδυνατεῖ καταμαθεῖν, [4] πληττόμενος δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν ὄψει καλῶν περὶ αὐτὰ ἐπτόηται.

119 In my division, the total number of levels is four. Lower-case letters indicate distinct moments within the same level. Plato qualifies all items at the first three levels—(1a.) through (3.b)—as beautiful (καλός), or as possessing beauty (τὸ καλόν, τὸ κάλλος); the last level is the rung of Beauty itself. This passage of the *Symposium* has been subjected to much discussion and has been divided in a variety of ways: see for instance Cornford (1950, 126–128), Robin (1964, 17–19), Moravcsik (1971, especially 286 for a detailed division of *Symposium* 210a7–e1), Rosen (1987, 263–277), Roochnik (1990, 116–120), Reale (1997, 201–221), Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004, 148–151).

(3.b) The single knowledge, study: ἐπιστήμη μία (210d6–e1), ἐκεῖνο τὸ μάθημα (211c6–d1)
(4) Beauty itself: αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν[120] (210e1–211b7, 211d1–212a7)

And here is Plotinus' text on the lover at I.3 [20] 2.5–13 (in italic within the text, I provide the headings for what I take to be loose parallels of the rungs of *eros*' ladder in the *Symposium* as given above):[121]

> So he [i.e., the lover] must be taught not to cling round…
>
> (*1.a*) *A single body* (*lines 5–6*)
>
> …one body and be excited by that, but…
>
> (*1.b*) *All bodies* (*line 6*)
>
> …must be led by the course of reasoning to consider all bodies and…
>
> (*2.a*) *Souls* (*lines 6–8*)
>
> …show the beauty that is the same in all of them, and that it is something other than bodies and must be said to come from elsewhere, and that…
>
> (*2.b*) *Practices* (*ways of life*) *and laws* (*lines 8–10*)
>
> …it is better manifested in other things, by showing him, for instance, beautiful ways of life and beautiful laws—this will accustom him to loveliness in things which are not bodies—and that…
>
> (*3.a*) *Arts, sciences, virtues* (*lines 10–11*)
>
> …there is beauty in arts and sciences and virtues. Then…
>
> (*3.b*)*Unity of beauties in Intellect* (*lines 11–13*)
>
> …all these beauties must be reduced to unity, and he must be shown their origin. But from virtues he can at once ascend to Intellect, to Being; and There he must go the higher way.

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[120] Cf. *Symposium* 211d3, e1. I take this characterization of the apex of the ascent as the summation of the descriptions given at 210e1–211b7 and 211d1–212a7. Other descriptions from the *Symposium* include: "something wonderfully beautiful in nature" (τι θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλόν: 210e4–5); "that itself which is beautiful (αὐτὸ […] ὃ ἔστι καλόν: 211c8–d1); "divine Beauty itself" (αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν: 211e3); "true Beauty" (τοῦ ἀληθοῦς [καλοῦ]: 212a5).

[121] I.3 [20] 2.5–13: Διδακτέον οὖν αὐτὸν μὴ περὶ ἓν σῶμα πεσόντα ἐπτοῆσθαι, [6] ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάντα ἀκτέον τῷ λόγῳ σώματα δεικνύντα τὸ [7] ἐν πᾶσι ταὐτὸν καὶ ὅτι ἕτερον τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ὅτι ἄλλοθεν [8] λεκτέον καὶ ὅτι ἐν ἄλλοις μᾶλλον, οἷον ἐπιτηδεύματα [9] καλὰ καὶ νόμους καλοὺς δεικνύντα—ἐν ἀσωμάτοις γὰρ ὁ [10] ἐθισμὸς τοῦ ἐρασμίου ἤδη—καὶ ὅτι καὶ ἐν τέχναις καὶ ἐν [11] ἐπιστήμαις καὶ ἐν ἀρεταῖς. Εἶτα ἓν ποιητέον καὶ [12] διδακτέον, ὅπως ἐγγίνονται. Ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἤδη ἀναβαίνειν [13] ἐπὶ νοῦν, ἐπὶ τὸ ὄν· κἀκεῖ βαδιστέον τὴν ἄνω πορείαν. The translation is from ARMSTRONG, minimally modified. For the specific allusions to and verbatim citations of the *Symposium* ascent found in this passage, see Catapano (1995, 166 note 16). Compare *Enneads* V.9 [5] 2.

The introduction of the last rung or level, (3.b), in this "Plotinian ladder of love" at first may appear problematic for two reasons, one internal and one external. First, within Plotinus' own division, when the lover reaches Intellect, he is no longer a lover in the narrow sense in which the term ἐρωτικός is used in the context of treatise I.3 [20], but is ready to take on the practice of higher dialectic (i.e., dialectic proper, or the peak of philosophical activity) in order to be at home in Intellect and, eventually, be able to move past it in the direction of the One. In this view, level (3.b) would seem to be, rather than the final step of the lover's ascent, the *trait d'union* between lower and higher dialectic. The second or external reason why level (3.b) may appear problematic is that if we compare my division of the Plotinian "ladder of love" found at I.3 [20] 2.5–13 with the division of the parallel Platonic text of the Greater Mysteries of love from the *Symposium* given above, we will immediately realize that in the Platonic ladder there is one further rung (i.e., level (4): the vision of Beauty itself), which in the text of from the *Enneads* seems to be missing.[122]

In reply to these observations, it may be said that if we grant that what in Plato is Beauty itself can here legitimately be linked to Plotinus' Good, as we saw both in Chapter 3 and in the present chapter, the Plotinian ladder of love will also have a fourth and truly final level, namely, union with the One, and at the same time step (3.b) will indeed be able to be considered the link between lower and higher dialectic. For Plotinus, in order to be able to take this further step, the individual soul first has to move not only beyond love as narrowly understood in I.3 [20], but also beyond the philosophical practice of superior dialectic, which in our text is introduced as "the higher way" (τὴν ἄνω πορείαν: I.3 [20] 2.13).

The main feature distinguishing superior dialectic from both music and love is the fact that the philosopher, in contrast with the practitioners of the other two disciplines, is spontaneously directed toward the intelligible or, as Plotinus writes borrowing the language of the *Phaedrus* (246c1, 249c4), naturally "winged" (ἐπτερωμένος: I.3 [20] 3.2; cf. also 1.9–10), disposed to learning (φιλομαθὴς: I.3 [20] 3.7) and virtuous (ἐνάρετον: I.3 [20] 3.8). What the philosopher still needs is a deeper familiarity with the immaterial realm of Intellect, a familiarity which, like the student in the program of higher studies of the *Republic*, one can acquire first through mathematical studies (see Plato, *Republic* VII.523a1–3, 525d5–8; cf. Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* XXVIII.182.8–14) and then through the practice of dialectic itself, until one becomes “a complete dialectician” (ὅλως διαλεκτικόν: I.3 [20] 3.9).[123]

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[122] The importance of other differences between the two "ladders," especially in their respective steps (3.a) and (3.b), should not be underemphasized, but the limited purpose of this section does not require that we discuss them explicitly in any detail.

We have thus reached the third division of *eros* introduced at the beginning of this section, *eros* as the fundamental force regulating all movement of ascent. This is what in our present threefold distinction I referred to as connatural, innate, or inborn *eros*. I already touched on this kind of *eros* in Chapter 3 and have repeatedly come back to it in the foregoing, but I think it is important here to distinguish it clearly both from the *eros* by which a given stage of pre-hypostatic matter turns toward its generator and, informed by it, becomes a definite hypostasis (i.e., hypostatic *eros*), and, more sharply, from *eros* as a method of ascent as it is presented in the treatise on dialectic, I.3 [20].

That connatural *eros* and hypostatic *eros* should be conceptually different will be clear from their respective outcomes. The latter is what a-temporally brings about a hypostasis, whether Intellect or soul, as a matter of necessity, in accordance with the Principle of Superabundance and the Principle of Reversion. By contrast, the former is like a natural inclination toward the One, but its outcome, rather than itself a hypostasis, is an assimilation to a hypostasis, or to a higher level of reality (leaving aside for now the fact that the soul is free to disregard the direction indicated by its inborn *eros* and reject the possibility of such an assimilation).

But more important for our discussion of the ascent is the difference between *eros* as a method of ascent and that *eros* which here I have called connatural, a distinction that has generally gone unnoticed in studies of Plotinus' thought. Put simply, connatural *eros* is not a method at all but rather the all-encompassing condition of possibility of all ascending movement and, as such, of all "methods" of ascent. We might briefly describe this *eros* as an inborn orientation of the soul toward the One conceived as the Good.

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[123] For our purposes, it is not necessary to dwell on the details of the nature of dialectic. Let it suffice to cite the description provided by Plotinus at I.3 [20] 4.2–6: dialectic “is the condition [ἕξις] which can speak about everything in a reasoned way [λόγῳ], and say what it is and how it differs from other things and what it has in common with them; in what class each thing is and where it stands in that class, and if it really is what it is, and how many real beings [τὰ ὄντα, i.e., the intelligibles] there are, and again how many non-real beings [τὰ μὴ ὄντα, i.e., the sensibles (on which see I.8 [51] 3.1–12 and Igal 1982–1998, I, 229 note 18)], different from real beings” (ARMSTRONG’S translation, with minor changes). As ARMSTRONG (I, 156–157 note 2) rightly remarks, it does not seem necessary to postulate any Stoic influence in this description of dialectic; all its elements can be safely derived from Plato (particularly *Sophist* 253b8–254b6, *Statesman* 262a5–263a1, *Philebus* 14c1–17a5, *Phaedrus* 265c5–266b2, *Republic* VII.531c9–535a2; cf. Igal 1982–1998, I, 228 note 17). In the remaining chapters of the treatise, chapters 5 and 6, Plotinus adds two further qualifications of dialectic. First (I.3 [20] 5), rather than being identical with philosophy, dialectic is “the valuable part of philosophy” (Ἦ φιλοσοφίας μέρος τὸ τίμιον: 5.9; see also the reference to *Philebus* 58d6–7 at 5.4–5). As such, it differs from logic (ὄργανον, according to Aristotelian usage: 5.10) because it does not deal merely with “bare theories and rules” (ψιλὰ θεωρήματά […] καὶ κανόνες: 5.11) but with “real beings” (τὰ ὄντα: 5.12). Secondly (I.3 [20] 6), it is because it knows real beings that dialectic is also the foundation of the other parts of philosophy, namely, physics and ethics (6.1–5 and 6.5–24 respectively).

In the opening pages of the first section of the previous chapter, I provided references to passages in which Plotinus thinks that the whole of reality desires and is oriented toward the Good conceived as the universal End. Only in some of those references does ἔρως (or else its verbal and adjectival cognates) appear as the operative word of desire. But there are other places in which Plotinus uses the term precisely to express the soul's inborn desire for the Good. Thus, while at V.5 [32] 12.7–9 Plotinus will write that all things desire (ἐφίεται) the Good by a necessity of nature (φύσεως ἀνάγκῃ),[124] in an earlier treatise, at VI.9 [9] 9.24–26, he refers to the inborn character of the soul's desire for the Good with the term ἔρως: "And the souls innate love makes clear that the Good is there, and this is why Eros is coupled with the Psyches in pictures and stories."[125] And just a little later in the same chapter, at lines 33–34: "The soul then in her natural state is in love with God and wants to be united with him; it is like the noble love of a girl for her noble father"[126] (cf. note 96 above for references to the image of the One as father). Perhaps even more emphatically, at III.5 [50] 4.22–23, Plotinus, speaking of Aphrodite as the mythical representation of the soul, writes: "Aphrodite is soul, and Eros is the activity of soul striving for the Good."[127] And close to the end of the same treatise, at III.5 [50] 9.39–41: "And so this being, Eros, has from everlasting come into existence from the soul's aspiration toward that which is superior and good, and he was there always, as long as soul, too, existed."[128] In addition to this, as we saw in the previous section and elsewhere, Plotinus makes clear that it is the One itself that provides the soul with its love (cf. VI.7 [38] 22.17–19, 31.17–18).

Thus, for Plotinus connatural *eros* is an inborn orientation toward the Good belonging to all things. In particular, it is the factor which allows the individual soul metaphorically to climb the levels of the Plotinian hierarchy and approach the One. Like hypostatic *eros*, the innate character of connatural *eros* brings within itself an element of necessity (III. 5 [50] 9.40: ἐξ ἀνάγκης; V.5 [32] 12.8: φύσεως ἀνάγκῃ), in the sense that the individual soul does not choose to desire the Good but simply desires it, innately, or as part of its very nature (cf. VI.9 [9] 9.25: σύμφυτος). Even if in its embodied state oftentimes the soul remains uncertain about the aim of its desire and only divines it in a distant manner (cf. V.5 [32] 12.7–9), it still desires the Good: "And the soul which has its love ready at hand, does not wait for a reminder from the beauties here, but because it has its love, even if it does not know that it has it, it is always searching…" (VI.7 [38] 31.18–21).[129]

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[124] V.5 [32] 12.7–9: Πάντα γὰρ ὀρέγεται ἐκείνου καὶ ἐφίεται αὐτοῦ [8] φύσεως ἀνάγκῃ, ὥσπερ ἀπομεμαντευμένα, ὡς ἄνευ αὐτοῦ [9] οὐ δύναται εἶναι.

[125] VI.9 [9] 9.24–26: Δηλοῖ δὲ ὅτι τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ ἔρως [25] ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ σύμφυτος, καθὸ καὶ συνέζευκται Ἔρως [26] ταῖς Ψυχαῖς καὶ ἐν γραφαῖς καὶ ἐν μύθοις.

[126] VI.9 [9] 9.33–34: Ἐρᾷ οὖν κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσα ψυχὴ θεοῦ ἑνωθῆναι θέλουσα, [34] ὥσπερ παρθένος καλοῦ πατρὸς καλὸν ἔρωτα.

[127] III.5 [50] 4.22–23: Ἀφροδίτη δὲ ψυχή, ἔρως δὲ ἐνέργεια ψυχῆς [23] ἀγαθοῦ ὀριγνωμένης.

[128] III.5 [50] 9.39–41: Ἀεὶ δὲ οὕτως [40] ὑπέστη ὅδε ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐφέσεως πρὸς τὸ [41] κρεῖττον καὶ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἦν ἀεί, ἐξ οὗπερ καὶ ψυχή, Ἔρως. ARMSTRONG'S translation, slightly modified.

What this last passage emphasizes, I think, is the natural priority of love over knowledge: not that knowledge is of no use or that it should be bypassed altogether, but that even when knowledge is absent, love is already at work. Perhaps we could try to make sense of this point through a brief detour into an observation by Socrates found in Plato's *Philebus*, at 35b6–7; Socrates states (my translation): "At least something in the one who is thirsty would have to be in contact with filling" (Πληρώσεώς γ᾽ ἄρα πῄ τι τῶν τοῦ διψῶντος ἂν ἐφάπτοιτο). It is indicative that in the broader context of this passage from the *Philebus* (33c5–36c2) Plato makes desire depend on memory (*Philebus* 35b11–c1), but shows awareness of the case of "someone who is empty for the first time" (*Philebus* 35a6). I take that what this case means for the general statement we just read from *Philebus* 35b6–7 is that someone who is thirsty is somehow connected to filling, or quenching, even while not knowing exactly what quenching is. Surely enough, this would mean to possess quenching merely as a desideratum, but this is precisely the point I am trying to make: one can possess something in desire even without possessing it cognitively.

In a comment to this text, D. Frede calls the case of someone who is empty for the first time a "negligible case" and denies reference to ἀνάμνησις of a previous existence.[130] I will venture an interpretation of this passage in relation to our topic and suggest that what in the *Philebus* might reasonably appear as a negligible case with no reference to the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις, from the perspective of Plotinian metaphysics already constitutes an allusion to a modality of presence in the soul which is indeed different from that of an object of ἀνάμνησις, but one which is far from negligible. This modality of presence is that of the One, which in its formlessness, unlike Intellect, is present to the soul not as something to be recollected and grasped cognitively, but as an original affective awareness which is perceived independently of any memory. Thus, even when one is empty for the first time, as with the apparently negligible case of the *Philebus*, emptiness already implies discomfort and the awareness of a lack. Lack, in turn, is not the total absence of something, but already an indication that one's present situation is at least less than ideal. In this particular case the desideratum, still cognitively unavailable due to the absence of memory and to the impossibility of recollection, is peculiarly adumbrated precisely in its absence: the One, of which there is no recollection, is nonetheless present to the soul, prior to knowledge and even in sleep, as the object of an innate desire, its connatural *eros*. In Plotinus' own words at v.5 [32] 12.11–14:[131]

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[129] VI.7 [38] 31.18–21: Καὶ ἡ πρόχειρον [19] ἔχουσα τὸν ἔρωτα ὑπόμνησιν οὐ περιμένει ἐκ τῶν καλῶν [20] τῶν τῇδε, ἔχουσα δὲ τὸν ἔρωτα, καὶ ἂν ἀγνοῇ ὅτι ἔχει, [21] ζητεῖ ἀεὶ…

[130] Frede (1993, 37 note 1 and 35 note 1 respectively).

> But the Good, since it was there long before to arouse an innate desire, is present even to those asleep and does not astonish those who at any time see it, because it is always there and there is never recollection of it; but people do not see it, because it is present to them in their sleep.

As I was saying, the connatural *eros* of which Plotinus speaks in the passages I cited before our brief detour into the *Philebus* contains an element of necessity. This sense of necessity, however, is in no way identical with coercion, although it does seem to be something like a brute fact in manifestations of soul other than rational souls. The difference, as I pointed out in Section 2 of Chapter 5, seems to be that all other entities in the Plotinian universe possess a natural tendency toward the Good but in a manner that does not allow them to depart from their assigned "position" in the hierarchical order and thus to become assimilated to the One. By contrast, while it remains true that the individual soul is naturally (i.e., necessarily) endowed with a desire for the Good, its connatural *eros*, this same soul has the ability to follow the upward direction toward which its love urges it, or else to turn away from the Good and commit itself to the pursuit of what for Plotinus are mere images of Beauty. However, even such a "turning away" remains possible only insofar as the individual soul recognizes something desirable (i.e., something good, although qualifiedly so) in these images.

One will object: What is the significance of positing an inborn tendency toward the Good in individual souls if, after all, these can disregard the direction in which this tendency points? That is, in what sense does connatural *eros* necessarily belong to the soul if at least some souls seem to move away from the goal indicated by their love? A similar question can be asked about the doctrine of the undescended soul (and, presumably, about Forms of individuals): In what sense is the best part of an individual soul undescended if the individual being to which that part is connected has to struggle to ascend, or to reintegrate itself in it? The answer to these questions, I maintain, is that while it is true that *eros* names an essential force or power present in the soul (a power without which no ascent to the Good nor the recognition of lesser goods would be possible, and in this sense a power which constitutes the regulating force of all ascending movement), in order for the ascent to be actualized, the direction indicated by this power needs to be recognized and the power itself ought to be put to work so as to bring about an active transformation of the soul. This active transformation, in turn, requires effort precisely because the soul's connatural *eros* is always in it but the soul does not always fully grasp the nature and ultimate origin and aim of that *eros*. For the transformation to take place, the soul must turn inward, toward the higher realities that are present in it, recognize its true nature and origin, and earnestly work on reaching the destination indicated by its love. Plotinus states at V.1 [10] 12.5–21:[132]

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[131] v.5 [32] 12.11–14: τὸ δ᾽ ἀγαθόν, ἅτε πάλαι παρὸν εἰς ἔφεσιν σύμφυτον, [12] καὶ κοιμωμένοις πάρεστι καὶ οὐ θαμβεῖ ποτε ἰδόντας, [13] ὅτι σύνεστιν ἀεὶ καὶ οὐ ποτὲ ἡ ἀνάμνησις· οὐ μὴν ὁρῶσιν [14] αὐτό, ὅτι κοιμωμένοις πάρεστι.

> For not everything which is in soul is immediately perceptible, but it reaches "us" only when it reaches sense-perception. Whenever something is active and does not communicate with the faculty of perception, it has not yet permeated the whole soul. So we have no knowledge as yet, since we are involved with the sense faculty, and are not a part of soul but the whole soul. Furthermore, each of the parts of the soul is always alive and active by itself, but there is recognition only when communication and perception takes place. Thus, if there is to be perception of what we have described as present [viz., higher realities], the power of apprehension must turn inwards, and must be made to attend there. Just as someone listening for a voice which he particularly wishes to hear stands aside

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[132] V.1 [10] 12.5–21: Οὐ γὰρ πᾶν, ὃ ἐν [6] ψυχῇ, ἤδη αἰσθητόν, ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται εἰς ἡμᾶς, ὅταν εἰς [7] αἴσθησιν ἴῃ· ὅταν δὲ ἐνεργοῦν ἕκαστον μὴ μεταδιδῷ τῷ [8] αἰσθανομένῳ, οὔπω δι' ὅλης ψυχῆς ἐλήλυθεν. Οὔπω οὖν [9] γιγνώσκομεν ἅτε μετὰ τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ ὄντες. καὶ οὐ μόριον [10] ψυχῆς ἀλλ' ἡ ἅπασα ψυχὴ ὄντες. Καὶ ἔτι ἕκαστον τῶν [11] ψυχικῶν ζῶν ἀεὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἀεὶ καθ' αὑτὸ τὸ αὑτοῦ· τὸ δὲ [12] γνωρίζειν, ὅταν μετάδοσις γένηται καὶ ἀντίληψις. Δεῖ τοίνυν, [13] εἰ τῶν οὕτω παρόντων ἀντίληψις ἔσται, καὶ τὸ ἀντιλαμβανόμενον [14] εἰς τὸ εἴσω ἐπιστρέφειν, κἀκεῖ ποιεῖν τὴν [15] προσοχὴν ἔχειν. Ὥσπερ εἴ τις ἀκοῦσαι ἀναμένων ἣν ἐθέλει [16] φωνήν, τῶν ἄλλων φωνῶν ἀποστὰς τὸ οὖς ἐγείροι πρὸς τὸ [17] ἄμεινον τῶν ἀκουστῶν, ὁπότε ἐκεῖνο προσέλθοι, οὕτω τοι [18] καὶ ἐνταῦθα δεῖ τὰς μὲν αἰσθητὰς ἀκούσεις ἀφέντα, εἰ μὴ [19] καθόσον ἀνάγκη, τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς εἰς τὸ ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι [20] δύναμιν φυλάττειν καθαρὰν καὶ ἕτοιμον ἀκούειν φθόγγων [21] τῶν ἄνω. The translation of this text is by Atkinson (1983), with minor changes. Cf. IV.3 [27] 30.11–16, IV.8 [6] 8.3–9. For a commentary and further parallels to V.1 [10] 12, see Atkinson (1983, 241–250); cf. also Perl (2015, 179–184).

> from the other voices and pricks up his ears for the preferable sound until this arrives, so too in this case perceptible noises must be left aside, except insofar as is necessary, and the soul's power of apprehension must be kept pure and ready to hear the sounds from above.

For Plotinus we are not always aware of what is already in us, nor do we always activate it, but higher realities in general and the One in particular are always present to the individual soul, as Plotinus remarks: "But if you went away, it was not from it [viz. the One]—for it is present—and you did not even go away then, but were present and turned the opposite way" (VI.5 [23] 12.27–29).[133] In this light, the task indicated by our connatural *eros* is to turn our attention back to the One. Elsewhere, in a quasi-Kantian tone that highlights the necessity of the efforts required to achieve happiness (εὐδαιμονία), Plotinus states: "people must not demand to be happy who have not done what deserves happiness" (III.2 [47] 4.45–47).[134] It is only through an active commitment, therefore, that the transformation of the soul, its assimilation to higher realities, can take place. This transformation is the fulfillment of the task indicated by the soul's connatural *eros*: the ascent itself.

5 Four Features Common to All the Stages of the Ascent: Subtraction, Implication of Lower Stages, Intensification of Love, Non-reciprocal Participation

Before I come to the actual journey of ascent, or the efforts required for the soul to reach its true origin, I will discuss four features that I take to be common to all stages of the journey. In the order in which I will deal with them in this section, these features are: first, in relation to the stage preceding it, each stage implies, not the addition, but the subtraction of something that was present on the previous stage; second, every stage presupposes the ones prior to it; third, proceeding upwards, each stage implies an increase in unity and in the intensity of love; fourth, that which assimilates the individual soul to a higher stage is not necessarily found on the higher stage.

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[133] VI.5 [23] 12.27–29: Εἰ δ᾽ ἀπῆλθες, οὐκ ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ—αὐτὸ γὰρ [28] πάρεστιν—οὐδὲ τότε ἀπῆλθες, ἀλλὰ παρὼν ἐπὶ τὰ ἐναντία [29] ἐστράφης.

[134] III.2 [47] 4.45–47: οὐδ᾽ ἀπαιτητέον [46] τούτοις τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν ὑπάρχειν, οἷς μὴ εἴργασται εὐδαιμονίας [47] ἄξια (ARMSTRONG's translation, modified). In this context εὐδαιμονία may be understood as the stable condition of the individual soul reintegrated in Intellect, on which see Section 2 of the next chapter. For what I called "a quasi-Kantian tone" (bearing in mind that Plotinian εὐδαιμονία and Kantian *Glückseligkeit* are not the same thing) cf. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* V, 130; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* IV, 393.

The first of these features is the idea that each of the stages of the ascent implies, not the addition of an element previously absent to the individual soul, but the subtraction of something which is only incidentally present. This element is not in itself something bad, but from the perspective of the ascent it does hinder one's reintegration into what is present to the soul always and essentially. Plotinus expresses this idea metaphorically when in the first treatise of the *Enneads* in Porphyry's order, a description of the work that the soul ought to do in order to ascend to Beauty itself, he borrows and recontextualizes an image from Plato and writes: "never stop 'working on your statue' " (μὴ παύσῃ τεκταίνων τὸ σὸν ἄγαλμα: I.6 [1] 9.13). The allusion is to Plato, *Phaedrus* 252d7, with the difference that in Plato the lover works, not on his own soul, but "on the soul of his beloved, fashioning it into the likeness of the god they once followed together."[135] For Plotinus, by contrast, one's statue is one's individual soul. At I.6 [1] 5.22–58, Plotinus expresses the same idea as he speaks of the soul purifying itself from ugliness (τὸ αἰσχρόν) and impurity (ἀκάθαρτον). At I.6 [1] 5.45–48 he writes of the soul: "its ugliness has come from an addition of something alien, and its business, if it is to be beautiful again, is to wash and purify itself and so be again what it was before."[136] And at I.1 [53] 12.12–14 Plotinus conveys the same idea through an image he borrows once again from Plato, *Republic* X.611c6–d8, where Plato compares the soul to the sea god Glaucus, whose nature cannot be detected when he lies at the bottom of the sea, maimed and covered by shells and seaweeds. Similarly, the soul's nature is disguised and defiled when, in its care of the body, the soul develops attachments to inferior desiderata which are considered as "accretions" (προστεθέντα: Plotinus I.1. [53] 12.14; cf. Plato, *Republic* X.611e3–612a4) to be eliminated if one is to behold the soul's nature in its purity.

Thus, if we take the statue (or, in the image borrowed from Plato, the god Glaucus) to be an analogue of the individual soul, to work on it means to work on reintegrating one's endowed self into one's ideal self. The patient polishing and chiseling of our statue, the work of activating what is always already in us, the movement of conversion that reverses our drifting away from the One, or the efforts, deserving of success, that we put into reintegrating our lower part or endowed self into our undescended part or ideal self: these are all complementary ways of naming the ascent and characterize each of its stages.

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[135] ARMSTRONG (I, 259 note 1).

[136] I.6 [1] 5.45–48: ᾧ δὴ [46] τὸ αἰσχρὸν προσθήκῃ τοῦ ἀλλοτρίου προσῆλθε καὶ ἔργον [47] αὐτῷ, εἴπερ ἔσται πάλιν καλός, ἀπονιψαμένῳ καὶ καθηραμένῳ [48] ὅπερ ἦν εἶναι. ARMSTRONG'S translation, with minor changes.

In this light, the metaphor of the sculptor working on his statue, initially chipping away the surplus material, then carefully smoothening its rough edges, and finally patiently polishing its uneven surface, should not be understood as a description of the efforts by which an originally or naturally shapeless and coarse piece of material is turned into an artwork through some technique or art—artificially. It is just the other way around. What is original is the statue itself, perfectly formed and polished. The surplus material does not belong to it naturally but came to it as something added from without, subsequently and incidentally. In this view, the work of the artist is not that of imparting the form and look of a statue on a piece of raw material, whether by changing its shape or by removing some portions of it to achieve the desired configuration (cf. Aristotle, *Physics* I.7.190b5–9). The work of the sculptor is rather to bring an already existing statue back to its original splendor, a splendor which, far from being lost in an irretrievable past, simply lies hidden in the present under layers of impurities. Thus the artist is strictly not a sculptor in the ordinary sense of the term, but a restorer of a work not of his own making. The responsibility for the restoration, however, is entirely his, for he is that statue, the soul itself. An appropriate understanding of this metaphor is important in order to grasp the nature of the ascent. For the individual soul, to make its way to the Good does not mean to take upon itself something that originally was not its own. On the contrary, it means precisely to eliminate that which does not belong to it essentially, something which is fundamentally foreign to its nature and which ultimately causes the soul to lose sight of the direction indicated by its connatural *eros*. Every stage of the ascent is understood as much in terms of what is left behind as it is in terms of the new plateau to which it leads the individual soul. Thus, Plotinus writes with his customary brevity at VI.5 [23] 12.24–25: “You will increase yourself then by rejecting all else, and the All will be present to you in your rejection” (Αὔξεις τοίνυν σεαυτὸν ἀφεὶς τὰ ἄλλα καὶ πάρεστί σοι τὸ πᾶν ἀφέντι). More laconically still, on the last line of treatise V.3 [49]: “Take away everything!” (Ἄφελε πάντα: V.3 [49] 17.38).[137]

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[137] Besides VI.5 [23] 12.24–25, the formula “Ἄφελε πάντα” has several parallels in the *Enneads*, most notably I.2 [19] 4.6, I.6 [1] 8.25, V.5 [32] 6.20, 13.11; cf. also V.1 [10] 12.18, VI.7 [38] 34.4, VI.9 [9] 9.50–51). See Gatti (1996, 211–216), who speaks of this ἀφαίρεσις precisely as a subtraction of alterity, the elimination of what in the soul is alien to its nature. For comments on this text, see Beierwaltes (1991, 165–172, 250–253), to whom I owe most of the parallels indicated in this note, and Ham (2000, 274–278).

As I pointed out earlier in my observations on the terminology of the ascent, the concept of flight or escape (φυγή) cannot be reduced to the simplistic idea of a literal departure from the body; instead, it should be conceived as a voluntary dissociation from wickedness. In this context, too, restoration should not be understood immediately as separation from the body. If this were the case, suicide would suffice to bring one's statue back to its original beauty: a shortcut to the Good and a substitute for the efforts required by the ascent. But as Plotinus makes clear in the last, brief treatise of the first *Ennead*, I.9 [16] *On going out of the body*, suicide is not an option (see also II.9 [33] 18.14–17), or at least not one that can be properly assessed by someone who has not yet become a sage (σπουδαῖος).[138] Thus, restoration, much like flight, must be conceived of as a process of dissociation from what does not originally belong to the soul, in particular from the morbid attachments to—and even the identification with—the needs and desires of the body. And although separation can be understood also literally as death, its literal meaning is not its primary meaning. Moreover, for Plotinus dissociation from the body appears to be a necessary condition only for a permanent reintegration of oneself into higher realities, but a temporary reintegration can be experienced even in, or in spite of, one's embodied condition, as Plotinus' own experience as reported by Porphyry (VP 23.15–18) seems to indicate.

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[138] In the same treatise (I.9 [16] 1.7–19) and elsewhere (I.4 [46] 7.31–32, 43–45, 8.5–9, 16.17–29), Plotinus seems to consider suicide an acceptable way to release the soul from the body, but only for someone who cannot advance further toward εὐδαιμονία, and only if the decision to commit suicide springs from a rational disposition. In other words, only the one who is already a sage (σπουδαῖος) can discern when suicide is opportune. It is significant that Plotinus advised Porphyry against it, as testified in VP 11.11–19 (cf. also Eunapius, *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* 354–357). The sixth-century commentator Elias, in his *Prolegomena to Philosophy* VI.15.23–16.2 (a text reported and translated at the end of the first *Ennead* in ARMSTRONG I, 324–325) refers to a treatise by Plotinus, "On reasonable departure" (περί εὐλόγου ἐξαγωγῆς; *De voluntaria morte*) and writes that Plotinus rejects all the five reasons for suicide considered acceptable by the Stoics (cf. SVF III.768, collected in the ethics section containing Chrysippus' views on so-called intermediate duties): a grave emergency, coercion to act immorally, a prolonged illness impeding the use of the body, extreme poverty, and madness (cf. Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* I.8.19–39). In light of the actual contents of *Enneads* I.9 [16], it is not clear that this is the treatise that Elias had in mind, even though we have no other treatise on suicide in the *Enneads*. Olympiodorus (*Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* I.8.17–18) references *Enneads* I.9 [16] as evidence that Plotinus allows suicide, but again, given the actual content of this treatise, it seems that Olympiodorus only remembered its title, as Westerink points out in his note to this passage. In I.9 [16] and in the passages from I.4 [46] cited in this footnote Plotinus seems to accept the second, third, and fifth reason given by the Stoics. For discussions of suicide in Plotinus, see Rist (1967, 174–177), Dillon (1994), McGroarty (2006, 126, 128–129, 131–132, 199, and especially 205–207).

The second feature common to all the stages of the ascent is the fact that for Plotinus every stage presupposes the one or ones prior to it. Thus, union is not possible without either noetic reintegration or purification, and noetic reintegration is pure fancy if it is not preceded by purification (we will consider the precise meaning of each of these stages in the next chapter). This is an important aspect of the ascent to bear in mind, for it explicitly tells us that there are no shortcuts to the end of the journey. One of Plotinus' remarks I quoted earlier, that "people must not demand to be happy who have not done what deserves happiness" (III.2 [47] 4.45–47), becomes understandable in light of this feature of the ascent. The task indicated by one's connatural *eros* is an orderly affair: skipping steps only brings to failure in the journey. So, for example, a moral life, which is an indispensable feature of a purified soul, is by no means superfluous to a life in Intellect: not in the sense that one acts virtuously in Intellect qua member of the noetic realm, but because one will never come to be reintegrated in Intellect without having first become virtuous in an ordinary sense. Thus, when in the treatise on dialectic Plotinus writes that the philosopher is naturally predisposed to the noetic realm and "winged" (I.3 [20] 3.2), this does not mean that as a philosopher one may disregard morality; it means instead that he or she should already be living morally, and failure to do so would result in that person simply not being a philosopher in the sense in which Plotinus understands the term. And as to confirm this point, at VI.7 [38] 36.6–10 Plotinus writes that we learn about the One by comparing and negating what we know about its effects, but he is quick to point out that "we are put on the way to it by purifications [καθάρσεις] and virtues [ἀρεταὶ] and adornings [κοσμήσεις]" (lines 8–9), that is, by living morally.[139]

Therefore, higher steps of the ascent do not obliterate lower ones, nor do they simply supersede them in the sense of making them irrelevant. Rather, a higher stage subsumes a lower one under itself by completing it and by fulfilling its purpose, thus maintaining it in existence as an accomplished task. But since this accomplishment is a matter of subtraction, what is maintained in existence is present precisely *qua subtracted*. We could say that a lower step would be pointless (i.e., it would not be what it is claimed to be) if it were not taken up as accomplished in a higher one; conversely, at least from the perspective of the ascending individual soul, a higher step would be pure fancy if what was achieved in a lower one were completely effaced. Similarly, just because each of us "possesses" an undescended soul, it does not mean that we do not need to be purified. Purification is precisely the beginning of a process of identification with what is best in us—our undescended soul—and what in it is most similar to the One, the so-called center of the soul of which I spoke earlier in this chapter. In fact, one wonders whether we would even be capable of desiring an existence at the level of Intellect without purification, and union without noetic reintegration. Ascent, therefore, is not only a work of purification of the soul indicated by its innate love, but a purification of love itself, which if followed aright and purified, or educated, leads the soul to a newly desirable desideratum, the realization that what previously one could not even envision as an object of desire is now lucidly grasped as fully worth loving.

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[139] Cf. Rist (1967, 220), ARMSTRONG (I, xxvi–xxvii).

In connection with this, it should be observed that the division of the ascent journey in clear-cut stages is somewhat artificial, and this for two reasons. First, because it is not always given explicitly by Plotinus, although I believe that it can be derived safely from the text, and certainly that it may serve a pedagogical purpose. The second reason for considering a division of the ascent in rigid stages as somewhat artificial is that not only the ascent as a whole is fundamentally a movement comprising several stages, but also each of its stages is a movement made up of sub-stages. In this movement, the last sub-stage of a given stage is simultaneously the first sub-stage of the next stage (with the obvious exception of perfect union, the final stage). It follows that, although it is possible conceptually to distinguish precise stages in the ascent, the division in stages should be understood as pointing less to the independence of these stages from the movement taken as a whole than to the continuity of the process understood as a trajectory ending in union.

This fact is significant because it indicates that love, while displaying internal qualitative differences (i.e., the stages and sub-stages of the ascent themselves), is fundamentally a unitary phenomenon. It also shows that the ascent is an orderly process, and that precisely because lower stages are essentially implicated in higher ones and essentially point to higher ones, either to skip a stage or to stop at an intermediary stage will result in one's failure to ascend. The implication of lower stages in higher ones (an implication which may be called vertical) is present also within smaller steps within each stage: for instance, the possession of higher virtues presupposes the possession of lower ones (1.2 [19] 7.10–30). But there is also another type of implication (which we may call horizontal), like that by which virtues on the same level reciprocally imply each another, on the model of the virtues in Intellect (1.2 [19] 7.1–10).[140]

We now turn to the third feature shared by all the stages of the ascent. While the process of derivation of all reality from the One qua Principle implied an increase in multiplicity and a decrease of unity in derived reality, the contrary movement of assimilation toward the One qua Good implies a reverse dynamics: a decrease of multiplicity and an increase in unity. Thus, the metaphorical artist's work of restoration is at the same time a work of "simplification" or "unification" on the statue which is his or her soul, an increase in the inner unity and erotic focus of the individual soul. More importantly for the subject of our study, while in derivation the *eros* of derived reality implied an increase in the gap between a given entity and its desideratum, the soul's ascending movement toward the Good displays a decrease in this same gap. In other words, to become assimilated to the One qua Good means at the same time to reduce the distance that is found between oneself and the aim of one's desire. The result of this "reduction" should not be understood generally as any given change taking place in the individual soul, but precisely as a thoroughgoing transformation of the soul's *eros*, or rather as a reformation of one's affective commitments until their orientation coincides with that of the love with which the soul is connaturally endowed. As the individual soul ascends, the breadth of its love decreases, in the sense that things that were desired at a lower stage of the ascent (e.g., bodily pleasures and superfluous needs, memories, and even consciousness, on which see Section 2 of Chapter 6) are left behind as no longer necessary nor, strictly, desirable. At the same time, the intensity of the soul's love grows, in the sense that as the soul becomes aware of the increasing superiority of its desideratum, the very love which essentially belongs to it increases and is transformed to suit its goal, ultimately aiming at becoming infinite love in order to meet that which is at once infinite love and infinitely lovable, that which alone is at the same time "beloved and love and love of itself" (VI.8 [39] 15.1).

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[140] Cf. Catapano (2006, 30, 191–208). I will return to the question of virtue in Section 1 of Chapter 6.

The fourth and final feature which I take to be common to all the stages of the ascent is the idea that what assimilates the individual soul to a higher stage is not necessarily found on that higher stage. We may take this formula as a preliminary version of what I will call the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation. This last feature of the ascent will require a more extensive treatment than the previous three. The issue can be clarified with reference to the first two chapters of Plotinus' treatise *On virtues*, I.2 [19], more precisely I.2 [19] 1.1–2.10. I will focus on the rest of this treatise in my account of the first stage of the ascent (purification), where I will provide a sketch of Plotinus' understanding of virtue and its degrees. For the moment, what we need to know is that for Plotinus the individual soul is assimilated to the divine World-Soul through virtue, both lower and higher (I.2 [19] 1.21–26), but, in accordance with my preliminary formulation of the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation, he maintains that virtue is absent in the divine. How is this possible? And why does Plotinus think that? Put differently, how is the individual soul made godlike by coming to possess a feature, virtue, which the god (i.e., in this context, the World-Soul) does not itself possess?

Plotinus' answer to these questions is found at 1.2 [19] 1.6–2.10. As suggested by Bréhier, this answer may be at the same time Plotinus' implicit reply to one of the objections that the old Parmenides raises against the young Socrates' defense of the Forms or Ideas as paradigms (παραδείγματα) in the first part of Plato's *Parmenides*.[141] The relevant passage of the dialogue between the two characters is *Parmenides* 132c12–133a7, which runs as follows:[142]

[SOCRATES:]	This, he said, is not reasonable, Parmenides; what seems much more reasonable to me is this: these Forms are like paradigms fixed in nature, while other things resemble them and are likenesses of them; and for the other things this participation in the Forms is nothing other than to resemble them.
[PARMENIDES:]	Well, he said, if something resembles the Form, is it possible for that Form not to be like that which has come to resemble it, insofar as it has become like it? Is there any way in which what is like is like what is not like it?
[SOCRATES:]	There is not.
[PARMENIDES:]	Rather, is it not indeed necessary for what is like to participate in one and the same Form?

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[141] Bréhier (1924–1938, I, 50, note 1), followed by ARMSTRONG (I, 132, note 1); cf. also Dillon (1983, 96–97), Pradeau (2003, 124–125). See especially Catapano (2006, 22, 34–37, 106–107), who gives a clear account of the problem and provides further bibliographical references.

[142] Plato, *Parmenides* 132c12–133a7: [SOCRATES:] Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τοῦτο, φάναι, ἔχει λόγον ἀλλ', ὦ Παρμενίδη, [d1] μάλιστα ἔμοιγε καταφαίνεται ὧδε ἔχειν· τὰ μὲν εἴδη ταῦτα [d2] ὥσπερ παραδείγματα ἑστάναι ἐν τῇ φύσει, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα τούτοις [d3] ἐοικέναι καὶ εἶναι ὁμοιώματα, καὶ ἡ μέθεξις αὕτη τοῖς ἄλλοις [d4] γίγνεσθαι τῶν εἰδῶν οὐκ ἄλλη τις ἢ εἰκασθῆναι αὐτοῖς. [d5] [PARMENIDES:] Εἰ οὖν τι, ἔφη, ἔοικεν τῷ εἴδει, οἷόν τε ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος [d6] μὴ ὅμοιον εἶναι τῷ εἰκασθέντι, καθ' ὅσον αὐτῷ ἀφωμοιώθη; [d7] ἢ ἔστι τις μηχανὴ τὸ ὅμοιον μὴ ὁμοίῳ ὅμοιον εἶναι; [d8] [S:] Οὐκ ἔστι. [d9] [P:] Τὸ δὲ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ ἆρ' οὐ μεγάλη ἀνάγκη ἑνὸς τοῦ [e1] αὐτοῦ [εἴδους] μετέχειν; [e2] [S:] Ἀνάγκη. [e3] [P:] Οὗ δ' ἂν τὰ ὅμοια μετέχοντα ὅμοια ᾖ, οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἔσται [e4] αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος; [e5] [S:] Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν. [e6] [P:] Οὐκ ἄρα οἷόν τέ τι τῷ εἴδει ὅμοιον εἶναι, οὐδὲ τὸ εἶδος [e7] ἄλλῳ· εἰ δὲ μή παρὰ τὸ εἶδος ἀεὶ ἄλλο ἀναφανήσεται εἶδος, [133a1] καὶ ἂν ἐκεῖνό τῳ ὅμοιον ᾖ, ἕτερον αὖ, καὶ οὐδέποτε παύσεται [a2] ἀεὶ καινὸν εἶδος γιγνόμενον, ἐὰν τὸ εἶδος τῷ ἑαυτοῦ μετέχοντι [a3] ὅμοιον γίγνηται. [a4] [S:] Ἀληθέστατα λέγεις. [a5] [P:] Οὐκ ἄρα ὁμοιότητι τἆλλα τῶν εἰδῶν μεταλαμβάνει, ἀλλά [a6] τι ἄλλο δεῖ ζητεῖν ᾧ μεταλαμβάνει. [a7] [S:] Ἔοικεν. The translation is by R. E. Allen (1997), modified; most notably, I translate εἶδος with "Form" rather than Allen's "character." At 132e1, Burnet (1899–1907) brackets the word εἴδους. In light of the interpretation that follows, I do not think that the bracketing is necessary.

[SOCRATES:] It is.

[PARMENIDES:] But if like things are like by participating in something, will that not be the Form itself?

[SOCRATES:] By all means.

[PARMENIDES:] Then it is not possible for anything to be like the Form, or for the Form to be like anything else; otherwise another Form will always appear alongside the Form, and should that [other Form] be like something, another again; and a new Form will never stop coming into being, if the Form comes to be like that which participates in it.

[SOCRATES:] You are quite right.

[PARMENIDES:] Then it is not by likeness that the other things participate in the Forms, but it is necessary to look for something else by which they participate.

[SOCRATES:] So it seems.

The main point of Parmenides' objection can be summed up thus: If two things (X and Y) are similar, or alike, in virtue of their participation in a common Form (F), it follows that F is like Y and X. But then X, Y, and F will be similar in virtue of their participation in a second Form (F-1). The same argument applies to the similarity between X, Y, F, and F-1, so that a third Form (F-2) is required; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Now, if applied to Plotinus' refusal to assign virtue to the god, Parmenides' objection would translate in the following statement: If it is through virtue that the individual soul becomes godlike, then the god must be virtuous (cf. 1.2 [19] 1.5–6), or else, one may surmise, the assimilation of the former to the latter will not occur through virtue. Plotinus, by contrast, presupposes that the nature of the divine World-Soul is superior to that of the individual soul precisely by not possessing that by which the individual soul becomes like it, that is, virtue. But how is this possible? Plotinus' answer is based on an important clarification of the meaning of participation (μεταλαμβάνειν: 1.2 [19] 1.40, 44, 47).

Before outlining his solution, Plotinus introduces two arguments in the form of questions, whose answers he must have taken to be negative. First, "if something is hot by the presence of heat, must that from which the heat comes also be heated?" (1.2 [19] 1.31–33). A negative answer to this question will give rise to the objection that the heated thing (which here stands for the individual soul) becomes hot (standing for the feature "virtuous") by receiving heat (standing for virtue) from fire understood as a heat-source external to the heated thing and possessing heat essentially (standing for the World-Soul as the external source of virtue possessing virtue essentially) (1.2 [19] 1.35–38).

Second, "if something is made hot by the presence of fire, must the fire itself be heated by the presence of fire?" (1.2 [19] 1.33–35)? Again, a negative answer would be met by the following objection: fire (which here stands for the World-Soul) is not heated (standing for "made virtuous") by the presence of fire simply because fire is the principle of heat, or heat itself (standing for virtue itself) (1.2 [19] 1.38–39). The result of both objections is that the source of heat (which stands for the World-Soul as the source of virtue) is indeed hot (standing for the feature "virtuous"), hence it must not be the case, contrary to what Plotinus claims, that whatever assimilates the individual soul to a higher stage is not found on that stage. One cannot help wondering, then, whether the analogy of heat and fire is helpful at all to illustrate what Plotinus has in mind here. Catapano rightly comments: "Per sfuggire a tali difficoltà occorre abbandonare il piano degli esempi e spiegarsi in termini strettamente metafisici"—which is precisely what Plotinus does in the rest of treatise 1.2 [19].[143]

The leading principle of his solution, what I called the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation, is found in 1.2 [19] 1.40–42. The text reads:[144]

> But if that in which the soul participates was the same as the source from which it comes, it would be right to speak in this way; but in fact the two are distinct.

The Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation could be reconstructed from this text as follows (numbered terms in italic indicate the elements involved in this principle):

> (i) *that in which* (ii) *something* participates is other than (iii) *that because of which* (ii) *it* participates in (i) *it*.

In his commentary on 1.2 [19] Catapano provides several useful variations of roughly the same principle: "ciò di cui (οὗ) un soggetto partecipa è diverso da ciò a causa di cui (ἀφ' οὗ) ne partecipa (μεταλαμβάνει) e a cui si assimila grazie a tale partecipazione"; "il modello non è ciò di cui (οὗ) le copie partecipano, ma ciò a causa di cui (ἀφ' οὗ) esse partecipano di una proprietà comune"; "Il principio della partecipazione è *altro* dal partecipato; il partecipante dunque non partecipa *del* principio, ma *dal* principio, ossia a causa (causa esemplare) di esso."[145] Plotinus exemplifies his point in the ensuing lines of the treatise, at

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[143] Catapano (2006, 20).

[144] 1.2 [19] 1.40–42: Ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν οὗ μεταλαμβάνει [41] ψυχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ ἦν τῷ ἀφ' οὗ, οὕτως ἔδει λέγειν· νῦν δὲ [42] ἕτερον μὲν ἐκεῖνο, ἕτερον δὲ τοῦτο.

[145] Catapano (2006, 20, 36, and 100 respectively).

I.2 [19] 1.42–52, where he explains that arrangement, order, and proportion are the way in which a perceptible house is a likeness of the intelligible house, but that these features do not exist in the intelligible. Similarly, virtue is a form of harmony, order, and arrangement of the soul by which we participate in the divine; but since in the divine there is no such arrangement, neither will there be virtue. Armstrong explains: "Order, arrangement, and proportion only appear when a form is 'extended' in matter, and are not present in the archetypal unity of the intelligible form; they are its expressions on a lower level."[146]

Plotinus himself throws further light on what I called the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation by distinguishing two ways in which likeness or assimilation (ὁμοίωσις: I.2 [19] 2.4) can occur (I.2 [19] 2.1–10). The first is reciprocal or symmetrical, as that between particular items deriving from the same principle (e.g., several particular reflections of you in a series of mirrors). The second way is non-reciprocal or asymmetrical (οὐκ ἀντιστρέφον: I.2 [19] 2.7), as when of two similar things one is primary (e.g., you and your reflection in a mirror). The first kind of likeness is that between several copies deriving from the same original; the second is between copy and original.[147] It seems fair to maintain that while in the former case the similarity between several items requires a further principle, common to them, which acts as the cause of their similarity (both ontologically and explanatorily),[148] in the latter case no further principle is necessary since the thing which between the two is primary *is* such a principle. It is only in the reciprocal similarity between copies of the same original that recourse to a further thing, the "paradigmatic" original, is necessary to explain the similarity; the explanation of the non-reciprocal similarity between a copy and its original, on the other hand, needs no third thing beyond the original involved in the similarity.

Plotinus must conceive the assimilation to the divine through virtue envisioned in I.2 [19] as an instance of non-reciprocal participation, from which he can conclude that it is not necessary for the divine to be virtuous in order to explain the soul's assimilation to it by virtue. As for the objection from the *Parmenides*, Plotinus' reply, never formally stated in the *Enneads* but rather assumed and made operative in the discussion of topics such as virtue,[149] must be that it relies on an inadequate understanding of participation. It is only if participation is taken to be a strictly reciprocal affair that an infinite regress in the postulation of Forms ensues; but matters are different if participation is understood non-reciprocally.[150] Thus, the relation of Forms to things is not primarily one between items partaking in the same property, but one of cause to effect, like the relation between myself and several images of myself in a series of mirrors. We could say that a gap is maintained between Forms and things, the gap that separates a cause from its effects.[151] So, when just acts participate in Justice, these are like Justice in the sense that they are possible because the agent somehow grasps Justice. Justice, however, is not like them, in the sense that while these are images or likenesses of Justice, Justice itself is not an image, but the cause and explanatory ground of all such images.[152]

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[146] Armstrong (I, 130, note 1). In the same note, Armstrong adds that this principle is "of great importance in Plotinus' theory of art; cp. V.8 [31] 1," where Plotinus argues that the beauty found in artifacts helps us to see the intelligible beauty to which they ultimately owe their beauty, but the former is weaker, as beauty, than the latter because the form present in matter (e.g., in the stone of a statue) lacks the unity that characterizes the transcendent Form: "For a thing is weaker than that which abides in unity [ἀσθενέστερον τοῦ ἐν ἑνὶ μένοντος] in proportion as it expands in its advance towards matter" (V.8 [31] 1.26–27).

[147] Cf. Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* IV.912.24–29. See Dillon (1983, 96), Catapano (2006, 106).

[148] On an interpretation of Plotinus' view of the causality of Forms as instrumental causality, in part against Aristotle's critique of Plato (e.g., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.8.1033b26–29, XII.3.1070a26–29, 6.1071b14–17), see Gerson (1994, 32, 34–35).

In the particular context of the treatise on virtues, I.2 [19], the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation and the argument against a reciprocal view of participation concern the assimilation of the purified (i.e., virtuous) individual soul to the divinity of the World-Soul. But one might ask: Do the same argument and principle hold for the soul's assimilation to Intellect and, further still, to the One? That is, are noetic reintegration and union also regulated by the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation? To be able to answer these questions is of great importance for our broader discussion of the ascent conceived of as *erotic* ascent; for the love of all derived reality is ultimately directed toward something other than the reality in which it inheres (i.e., precisely to the One qua Good and qua other than the loving soul), while the love of the One, henologic *eros*, is a wholly self-contained love, a pure self-positing in which nothing is affirmed, loved, or desired beyond itself. But if the endpoint of the ascent is the assimilation to a love of an altogether different kind than the one regulating the soul's ascending movement toward the Good, how can it be through the latter that we achieve assimilation to the former? In other words, how can the love at work in the ascent be a trace of, or a participation in, henologic *eros* if the two are fundamentally different kinds of love? One will immediately realize that if the argument and principle concerning participation which I derived from the first two chapters of I.2 [19] may be legitimately extended beyond the relatively limited horizon of the treatise on virtues, the questions just asked about the process of ascent will be met with an answer whose systematic import for Plotinus' metaphysics is far-reaching.

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[149] See Catapano (2006, 37, note 68).

[150] Thus, Plotinus' view of participation can be understood at the same time as an implicit reply to the so-called third man argument, which seems to be based on a strictly reciprocal notion of participation (see Aristotle, *On Ideas* fr. 4 = Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 84.21–85.12, and see further 92.30–93.7; Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations* 22.178b36–179a10, *Metaphysics* I.9.990b17, VII.13.1039a2–3, XI.1.1059b8–9; cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 131e8–132b2); cf. Catapano (2006, 34–36). For a different discussion of how Plotinus might have replied to the third man argument see Hunt (1997).

[151] For contemporary readings holding that this portion of the *Parmenides*, 132c12–133a7, contains a non-reciprocal view of participation, see Bestor (1980, 61–65), Ferrari (2004, 84–87).

[152] If this explanation is feasible, presumably the next task would be to provide a reply to the Aristotelian objection that Forms cannot be causes (e.g., *Metaphysics* I.9.990a34–b9, 991a8–b9), a task which would take us a little too far from our main topic.

What I am suggesting here are two things. The first is that the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation should indeed be extended beyond the limited field of application of treatise I.2 [19], so that a non-reciprocal relation of participation will be held to apply universally to the relation of lower to higher realities. Second, I am suggesting that such a systematic extension of the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation is a consequence of the concomitance of several other principles that we have encountered thus far in this study (i.e., most notably, the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect, the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, and the Principle of Henologic Giving) from the vantage point of the ascent. Stated otherwise, what the Principle of Henologic Giving (along with its corollary principles: the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect and the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect) accomplishes from the perspective of derivation, the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation accomplishes from the perspective of the ascent, namely, to secure both the transcendence of the love of the One and the continuity of all love as ultimately dependent on henologic *eros*. For a synoptic view of these principles, see the Appendix.

My first suggestion—that in Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation (or a non-reciprocal view of participation) applies universally to every relation of entities of an inferior level to those of a superior level—would seem to be standard Plotinian doctrine. For example, when soul turns matter into a sensible body by communicating life to it, the body participates in the life of soul in the way in which an effect participates in its cause, that is, non-reciprocally in the sense outlined above. Therefore, both body and soul are said to be alive, but their similarity is not measured by a third kind of life that applies to them in the manner of an Aristotelian universal, for their ways of being alive are fundamentally different: the former is a life principle, while the latter is alive as a recipient of life. The same reasoning applies to Form and everything that participates in it: the participation is of the latter in the former, not of both in a third term. Likewise with the One: every unity, even the unity of Intellect, is a likeness of a unity which, not participating in any further unity, is unlike any other unity. This unity is the perfectly Simple from which all complexity and multiplicity must be derived (in accordance with the Principle of Prior Simplicity). Thus, even what in us is most similar to the One, the center of the soul of which I spoke earlier, participates in the One in a non-reciprocal way. From the perspective of the ascent, this means that we achieve union through a reintegration in what in us is most similar to the One (according to the Principle of Affinity and, implicitly, the Principle of Assimilation). However, this similarity does not imply that our best part and the One share in a common property, but rather that our best part (or, more precisely, the unity of its *eros*) is like the One in the sense that it is related to it like an effect is related to its cause.

As for my second suggestion, the universal applicability of the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation is the necessary counterpart of the Principles of Superiority of Cause to Effect and the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect from the vantage point of the ascent and, ultimately, a consequence of the Principle of Henologic Giving. Thus, if it is true that, according to the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, an effect resembles its cause, it is likewise true, in accordance with the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation, that this resemblance is precisely the resemblance between an effect and its cause, not the resemblance of both to a third item, hence the necessity of the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect as the natural companion of the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect. That is, the two terms in question do not stand in a reciprocal relation of participation of effects in a third, common cause, but resemble each other non-reciprocally precisely qua cause and effect. Further, this is so because the cause gives what it does not itself have: the Principle of Henologic Giving. As we saw when I first introduced this principle in Chapter 2, *strictly speaking* this principle applies only to the One. However, I believe that a *loose* applicability can be envisioned also with respect to the other hypostases. Thus, Intellect is Form and gives form to soul. But soul possesses form without *being* Form; so, in this sense Intellect, too, gives what it does not have, that is, form as *possessed* form, while Intellect itself *is* Form. Similarly, soul is life and gives life to what is lifeless; but what is made alive possesses life without *being* life, and so to this extent also soul gives what it does not have: life as *possessed* life, whereas soul *causes* life while itself being *essentially* alive.

We thus come to the One. What does the One give which it does not itself have? As I argued in Chapter 2, the One is described in terms of *eros*: itself "beloved and love and love if itself" (VI.8 [39] 15.1). As the erotic power which is the One overflows and generates something other than itself (as per the Principle of Double Activity and the Principle of Superabundance), its "gift" to all derived reality (or derived reality *as* this very gift) is also erotic in nature (as per the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect): it is love for the One qua other. The One alone, however, possesses a love which is not directed to something other than itself, in accordance with the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect. Therefore, the One gives what it does not have, as per the Principle of Henologic Giving. Both the One and all that derives from it are characterized by love, and to this extent there is a clear continuity in Plotinus' metaphysics. However, since nothing in derived reality can be legitimately called the Cause (efficient and final: Principle and End) of love except the One, the similarity between the One and everything derived from it is not a horizontal relation in which they both depend for their love on a third erotic nature, but precisely a similarity between that whose love is directed outwardly (i.e., the love of all derived reality for the One qua Good) and that whose love is a pure self-positing in which nothing further is sought (i.e., henologic *eros*, the love of the One), in accordance with the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation.

In conclusion, it seems that the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation can be applied consistently to every level of Plotinus' hierarchy and is systematically tied to all the other basic principles of his metaphysics that we have discussed.

CHAPTER 6

The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent

The Stages of the Journey

Having dealt with some of the fundamental conditions and features of the individual soul's ascent which are common to all its stages, what is left for me to do in this final chapter is to provide an account of the journey itself, a journey which for the soul is at the same time a return to the Principle whence it came and a process of reintegration into what is most deeply itself. I will present this work of reintegration of the individual soul into higher realities, or the task indicated by its connatural *eros*, in what traditionally have been understood as the three main stages of the ascent:[1] ascent to soul or purification, ascent to Intellect or noetic reintegration, and ascent to the One or union.

1 Ascent to Soul: Purification

The goal of this stage of the ascent is to realize that one's deeper identity lies neither in the body nor in the association with it at the level of the composite (συναμφότερον), but rather in the soul taken by itself. The result of this realization is a turning away from the material and a conversion (ἐπιστροφή) toward the immaterial, Intellect, as that to which the soul is most akin (cf. I.2 [19] 4.13–18).

One might conjecture that if first and foremost we are souls, what we do in our embodied condition is of little or no consequence to our deepest identity. This is not Plotinus' position. On the contrary, the process of identification with one's soul immediately requires a disciplining of our empirical or endowed self, both with respect to our body and in our relations with the world, including others.

Plotinus' own behavior is telling in this regard. Porphyry records some facts about Plotinus' life that clearly indicate his master's ethical stance, a stance that some have called ascetic.[2] We are told that Plotinus was a vegetarian, to

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[1] See most explicitly O'Meara (1993, 103–106) and Ousager (2004, 19–119); cf. Arnou (1967, 195–278), P. Hadot (1993, 48–73), Rist (1967, 213–230), Wallis (1995, 82–90), Lacrosse (1994, 80–104), Gatti (1996, 179–236), Gerson (1994, 185–224), Reale (2004, VIII, 171–186).

[2] Cf. Inge (1928–1929, II, 167), Dillon (1999, 315).

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the point of refusing to take medicines containing parts of wild animals (VP 2.3–5). From *Enneads* I.2 [19] 5.18–19, one might also infer that Plotinus advocated and practiced celibacy.[3] In his public life, we know not only that he was the active leader of a philosophical circle, but also that one of his main activities was the care of orphans (both for their education and for the administration of their property) entrusted to him by wealthy parents, who evidently held him in high esteem and thought that he would make "a holy and godlike guardian" (VP 9.9: ἱερῷ τινι καὶ θείῳ φύλακι). From Porphyry we also learn that Plotinus had an accommodating character when dealing with others, but was inflexible when it came to self-discipline. He writes at VP 9.16–22:[4]

> Yet, though he shielded so many from the worries and cares of ordinary life, he never, while awake, relaxed his intent concentration upon the intellect [τὴν πρὸς τὸν νοῦν τάσιν]. He was gentle, too, and at the disposal of all who had any sort of acquaintance with him. Though he spent twenty-six whole years in Rome and acted as arbitrator in very many people's disputes, he never made an enemy of any of the officials.

If we are to trust Porphyry's witness, there is little doubt that Plotinus was a person who followed a strict moral code; he did so, moreover, as a matter of principle, or in virtue of a deep commitment to his metaphysical views, that is to say, because assimilation to higher realities would not be possible without a corresponding dissociation from making the care for the body and the attachment to its pleasures primary matters of concern.

From this, one can infer that for Plotinus purification in a general sense means identification with, or reintegration in, soul, but still as members of this material universe. This condition is what in treatise I.2 [19] *On virtues* Plotinus, echoing Plato's passage from *Theaetetus* 176a5–c5, especially 176a8–b3, b8–c3 (see Chapter 5 note 3 for the Greek text; cf. also *Republic* X.613a7–b1), calls "to be made like god" or "to be assimilated to god" (θεῷ [...] ὁμοιωθῆναι: I.2 [19] 1.3–4). As I mentioned in my discussion of the Principle of Non-Reciprocal Participation in the last section of the previous chapter, the specific "god" that Plotinus has in mind at this stage is the soul that effortlessly rules this universe while remaining intent on higher realities, that is, the World-Soul (I.2 [19] 1.13–14). But how does this "divinization" take place? How does an embodied individual not only come to the basic awareness that its deeper identity lies in soul, but also become like the most divine soul in this universe? Plotinus' answer is given indirectly, but plainly, at I.2 [19] 1.5: through virtue (ἀρετή). While using material from other treatises as well, here I will primarily engage the arguments presented in the treatise on virtues, I.2 [19].

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[3] Cf. Porphyry, *Sententiae* 32, 34.7–10; see Inge (1928–1929, II, 168). For a different opinion on the matter see Ousager (2004, 270–274, especially 271).

[4] For comments on this passage, cf. Brisson (1992, 14–25).

According to Plotinus, from the perspective of the individual soul which is still in the process of ascent, virtue is of two kinds, or has two degrees. There are (i) lower, inferior or lesser (ἐλάττους) virtues (see I.2 [19] 5.11, 7.11–14), more commonly called political or civic (πολιτικαί) virtues (see I.2 [19] 1.16–23, 2.14, 3.2–10, 7.25), and there are (ii) higher, superior or greater (μείζους) virtues (see I.2 [19] 1.22, 26, 3.1–5), more commonly called purifications (καθάρσεις) or purificatory[5] virtues (see I.2 [19] 3.8, 11).[6] But as Plotinus points out at I.2 [19] 7.9, all virtues are purifications, hence my collective designation of this stage of the ascent as "purification."[7] This seems to be Plotinus' position also in chapters 4–6 of his earliest treatise, I.6 [1]; in particular, at I.6 [1] 6.2 he writes that "every virtue is a purification" (πᾶσα ἀρετὴ κάθαρσις).

In addition to civic virtues and purifications, Plotinus distinguishes two further kinds or degrees of virtues, though without assigning them any technical name: (iii) the virtues of the one who has already achieved purification (I.2 [19] 4.4–5), and (iv) the virtues that are in Intellect as paradigms, that is, the Forms of the virtues (I.2 [19] 7.1–3).[8]

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[5] The adjective "purificatory" (καθαρτικαί) as referred to higher virtues is found, not in Plotinus, but in Porphyry (*Sententiae* 32, 26.1, 27.1, 27.8, 30.8, 31.6, 31.9), who also calls these virtues "contemplative" (θεωρητικαί: *Sententiae* 32, 25.9; cf. also 32, 22.15, 23.1, 24.1). Being an interpretive paraphrase of Plotinus' treatise on virtues (I.2 [19]), the same *sententia* distinguishes also the lower kind of virtues (i.e., the civic or political virtues; cf. *Sententiae* 32, 23.8, 24.5, 24.7, 25.6–7, 26.14, 27.8, 30.6), which Porphyry also calls "practical" (πρακτικαί: *Sententiae* 32, 31.5).

[6] Passages from Plato into which Plotinus is likely to have read this division of the virtues include: (i) for lower or political virtues, *Republic* IV.427e6–434d1 (see the adjective πολιτική referred to courage at IV.430c3) and VI.500d4–8 (notice the adjective δημοτική, "of the people," referred to virtue at line d8), and *Phaedo* 82a11–b1 (where the phrase τὴν δημοτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν occurs); (ii) for higher virtues or purifications, *Phaedo* 69a6–c3 (at b2 virtue is described as true: τῷ ὄντι; at b8–c3 the virtues considered true are said to be a purification and a cleansing: κάθαρσις and καθαρμός). Plotinus voices the necessity of both kinds of virtues on the background of the theme of assimilation to the divine of *Theaetetus* 176a8–b8 and of key passages from the second speech in praise of love in the *Phaedrus*.

[7] There may be a parallel between the division of civic virtues and purifications of I.2 [19] and the distinction between natural (φυσικαί) and perfect (τέλειαι) virtues found in I.3 [20] 6.18–24, probably a re-elaboration of Aristotle's distinction between natural (φυσική) virtue and virtue in the proper sense (κυρία) given at *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.13.1144b1–21, which Plotinus may be combining with the affirmations found in the references from the *Phaedo* cited in the previous note. On this issue see Catapano (2006, 198–199).

[8] In reference to I.2 [19], Dillon (1999, 333 note 10) writes that "it does not in fact seem to be Plotinus' intention to postulate further grades of virtue," but I am not sure that this is the

I will try to clarify the meaning of purification and the basic difference between the degrees of virtue, in particular the first two (the civic virtues and the purifications), by considering two fundamental issues addressed by Plotinus in treatise I.2 [19]. First, since the civic virtues alone are not sufficient to reach assimilation with the divine, in what sense are they still necessary for it? Second, how do the higher virtues or purifications differ from the lower ones? There is a third fundamental issue faced by Plotinus in I.2 [19]: since it is through virtue (more precisely, the higher virtues, but these imply the lower ones) that the soul becomes assimilated to the divine, why does Plotinus maintain that the divine does not possess these virtues? As it will be recalled, I already addressed this problem in my discussion of the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation in the previous chapter. So, let us begin with the first question.

At I.2 [19] 3.11–19, Plotinus tells us that the civic virtues are the four traditional virtues treated in Book IV of Plato's *Republic* (427e6–434d1): wisdom (φρόνησις) for the rational part of the soul (τὸ λογιστικόν, called τὸ λογιζόμενον in treatise I.2 [19]); courage (ἀνδρία) and temperance (σωφροσύνη) respectively for the spirited (τὸ θυμοειδές, called τὸ θυμούμενον in treatise I.2 [19]) and appetitive (τὸ ἐπιθυμετικόν) parts understood as two distinct manifestations of the part of the soul that lacks reason (τὸ ἄλογον); and justice (δικαιοσύνη) as the harmonious state of the soul resulting from the hierarchical ordering of the parts of the soul (I.2 [19] 3.17–19) under reason, or the condition in which each part "minds its own business when ruling and being ruled are concerned" (οἰκειοπραγίαν ἀρχῆς πέρι καὶ τοῦ ἄρχεσθαι: I.2 [19] 1.20–21, and see also 6.21, 7.5; cf. Plato, *Republic* IV.434c8–9)[9]. Through these virtues, the individual soul gains awareness of the fact that its attachment to the body, especially bodily pleasures, does not belong essentially or originally to its nature. The practice of virtue and the acquisition of a virtuous state (διάθεσις) signify a conversion for the soul: it is the beginning of a resolute turn from merely bodily concerns toward the immaterial realm of Intellect, to which

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case. It rather seems to me that these two further distinctions are in fact drawn (cf. Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* VIII.2.12–14), but that they play a relatively small role in I.2 [19]. It is Porphyry who will make them explicit: he will qualify the former distinction, (iii), with a periphrasis, as "the [virtues] of the one who has already achieved perfect contemplation and already enjoys vision" (*Sententiae* 32, 23.1–2: αἱ τοῦ ἤδη τελείου θεωρετικοῦ καὶ ἤδη θεατοῦ; see also 32, 28.6–29.7), and will call the latter kind of virtues, (iv), "paradigmatic" (παραδιγματικαί: *Sententiae* 32, 28.6, 29.9, 31.8, and cf. 23.2–3); see Kalligas (2014, 133–134). For an overview of the history of the degrees of virtue in Neoplatonism, see O'Meara (2003, 40–49); on the same topic from Plotinus through the Middle Ages, see Catapano (2006, 37–49) and cf. Trouillard (1955b, 166–185).

[9] At *Charmides* 161b3–162b10, Plato has Socrates investigate—and reject—the notion of "doing one's own things" (τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν: 161b6) as a definition of temperance.

the soul is akin (I.2 [19] 3.19–22). It is in this sense that Plotinus understands the civic virtues as a reordering of the soul's priorities or, as he puts it, as the measure (μέτρον) and limit (ὅρος) of the unmesuredness (ἀμετρία) and unlimitedness (ἀοριστία) which the soul experiences when it is subject to the desires and opinions intimately connected with the body. It is not accidental that by this work of reordering, virtue reflects, at a lower level of Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy, the primordial informing or limiting gesture of the One on intelligible matter. Plotinus writes at I.2 [19] 2.13–22, 32–34[10]

> The civic virtues, which we mentioned above, do genuinely set us in order and make us better by giving limit and measure to our desires, and putting measure into all our experience; and they abolish false opinions, by what in general is better, that is, by [the soul] being endowed with limit and lying outside of the unlimited and indefinite and being that which has been measured. And having themselves been limited, insofar as they are a measure for a matter which is the soul, they are made similar to the measure There and have a trace in them of the Best There. That which is altogether unmeasured is matter, and so altogether dissimilar: but in so far as it participates in form, it becomes similar to that [Good] which is formless.

The necessity of civic virtue for the ascent becomes clear in a passage from the so-called *Großschrift* in which Plotinus criticizes Gnostic morality (II.9 [33] 15.18–40). According to Plotinus the Gnostics, despite their claim of already possessing salvific knowledge, or *gnosis*, fail to give tangible proof of this possession, both in their conduct and in their studies. Instead, they turn to pleasure and the satisfaction of individual bodily needs while showing indifference to virtue. We read at II.9 [33] 15.22–29, 32–34:[11]

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[10] I.2 [19] 2.13–22, 32–34: Αἱ μὲν τοίνυν [14] πολιτικαὶ ἀρεταί, ἃς ἄνω που εἴπομεν, κατακοσμοῦσι μὲν ὄντως [15] καὶ ἀμείνους ποιοῦσιν ὁρίζουσαι καὶ μετροῦσαι τὰς [16] ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ὅλως τὰ πάθη μετροῦσαι καὶ ψευδεῖς δόξας [17] ἀφαιροῦσαι τῷ ὅλως ἀμείνονι καὶ τῷ ὡρίσθαι καὶ τῶν ἀμέτρων καὶ [18] ἀορίστων ἔξω εἶναι καὶ τὸ μεμετρημένον· καὶ αὐταὶ ὁρισθεῖσαι, [19] ᾗ μέτρα γε ἐν ὕλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ, ὡμοίωνται τῷ ἐκεῖ μέτρῳ καὶ [20] ἔχουσιν ἴχνος τοῦ ἐκεῖ ἀρίστου. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ πάντῃ [21] ἄμετρον ὕλη ὂν πάντῃ ἀνωμοίωται· καθ' ὅσον δὲ μεταλαμβάνει [22] εἴδους, κατὰ τοσοῦτον ὁμοιοῦται ἀνειδέῳ ἐκείνῳ ὄντι. I.2 [19] 2.18 contains a textual crux. I follow the reading found in most manuscripts, which is the one given by HS$_2$ (however, they modify it in their *Addenda*), with Catapano (2006, 111–112), who provides a helpful discussion of the issue.

[11] II.9 [33] 15.22–29: Καίτοι ἐχρῆν τοὺς ἤδη ἐγνωκότας [23] ἐντεῦθεν διώκειν, διώκοντας δὲ πρῶτα [24] κατορθοῦν ταῦτα ἐκ θείας φύσεως ἥκοντας· ἐκείνης γὰρ τῆς [25] φύσεως καλοῦ ἐπαίειν τὴν ἡδονὴν τοῦ σώματος [26] ἀτιμαζούσης. Οἷς δὲ ἀρετῆς μὴ μέτεστιν, οὐκ ἂν εἶεν τὸ

> Yet those who already have the *gnosis* should start going after it here and now, and their pursuit should first of all set right their conduct here below, as they come from a divine nature; for that nature is aware of nobility and despises the pleasure of the body. But those who have no share of virtue would not be moved at all toward that higher world. This too is evidence of their indifference to virtue, that they have never made any treatise about virtue, but have altogether left out the treatment of these subjects […]. For it does no good at all to say "Look to God," unless one also teaches how one is to look.

From the perspective of Plotinus' critique of Gnostic morality, the practice and acquisition of civic virtue, or the habit of the good ordinary moral conduct summed up in the four chief virtues of the *Republic*, is not itself the end of the journey, but a necessary means to a higher end and, secondarily, a way of showing that one is serious about pursuing such an end. And as I mentioned earlier, it seems that Plotinus took it upon himself to behave in accordance with this view.

In the fourth chapter of the treatise on virtues Plotinus explains that the degree of virtue varies depending on whether a soul is in the process of purification (1.2 [19] 4.3: ἐν τῷ καθαίρεσθαι) or at the end of this process (1.2 [19] 4.3–4: ἐν τῷ κεκαθάρθαι). The former, the condition of being in the process of purification (1.2 [19] 4.3: ἐν τῷ καθαίρεσθαι), is the work through which the individual soul becomes wise, temperate, courageous, and just (i.e., the lower virtues), thus putting order in its priorities and redirecting itself away from the sensible and toward the intelligible (1.2 [19] 3.11–22). It is obvious that the process of purification cannot itself be the good the soul is after at this stage. The simple reason for this is that such a process, being a process, is a means to an end. From the limited perspective of lower virtue, the end is the achieved state of purification, or the actual possession of the civic virtues as habitual states of the soul. This amounts to the first step of the reintegration into one's higher self: it is the realization that one's true nature lies in the soul, that the soul is other than the body, and that the soul's attachment to the body and its pleasures as primary matters of concern do not belong originally to its nature but are added on to it as an alien element, or like something which detracts from the original look of one's "statue" (1.6 [1] 9.13). The soul in its pure state, therefore, is what is left (1.2 [19] 4.9–10: τὸ καταλειπόμενόν) at the end of the process of purification and at the same time the goal of this process,

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[27] παράπαν κινηθέντες πρὸς ἐκεῖνα. Μαρτυρεῖ δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ [28] τόδε τὸ μηδένα λόγον περὶ ἀρετῆς πεποιῆσθαι, ἐκλελοιπέναι [29] δὲ παντάπασι τὸν περὶ τούτων λόγον […] [32] Οὐ γὰρ [33] δὴ τὸ εἰπεῖν "βλέπε πρὸς θεόν" προὔργου τι ἐργάζεται, [34] ἐὰν μὴ πῶς καὶ βλέψῃ διδάξῃ.

or, as Plotinus puts it, already a sort of perfection (1.2 [19] 4.5: οἷον τέλος ἤδη) and something like the good (1.2 [19] 4.12: ἀγαθοειδῆ). One could say that what virtue does is simply to reawaken the soul to its true nature—its connatural *eros*—and resolutely direct it toward Intellect.

Accordingly, Plotinus argues that not even the state of achieved purification (1.2 [19] 4.3–4: ἐν τῷ κεκαθάρθαι) can be the true end of the process of assimilation for the individual soul. And this is so for one simple reason: because the soul is “not a nature capable of remaining in the real good, for it has a natural tendency in both directions” (Ἢ οὐχ ἱκανὴν πρὸς τὸ μένειν ἐν τῷ ὄντως ἀγαθῷ· πέφυκε γὰρ ἐπ᾽ ἄμφω: 1.2 [19] 4.12–13). Lack of stability is thus part of the nature of the individual soul even in its purified state. In order to achieve this stability, the purified soul, that is, the soul that has gone through the process of acquiring the four lower or civic virtues and, thereby having brought to an end its identification with the desires and the opinions derived from its intercourse with body, is now initially directed toward the intelligible, needs something extra, some further training, as it were. It is here that the higher virtues or purifications come into the picture. But for this to be possible—it is worth stressing it once again—the soul ought to be purified. The journey toward Intellect starts where one’s identification with soul, or purification, has been achieved.

This stage, the stage of achieved purification, acts as a sort of boundary between the process leading up to it, or purification proper, and the process starting from it, or the actual knowledge of the intelligibles that follows from a previous conversion to them. As a boundary, in a sense it belongs neither to the process that precedes it nor to the one that follows it; but in another sense it belongs to both as the link between them which warrants the continuity of the ascent as a single movement.

Let us move on, then, to the second question asked earlier on in our discussion of virtue: How do the higher virtues differ from the lower ones? A sketch of the function of the higher virtues is provided at 1.2 [19] 4.13–29, immediately following the description of soul as that whose nature is incapable of remaining in the real good at 1.2 [19] 4.12–13. After having argued that for the soul to be purified means already to be converted toward the immaterial intelligible realm as that which is both contrary to body and akin to soul (1.2 [19] 4.13–18), Plotinus, at 1.2 [19] 4.18–25, writes about the condition resulting from the purification of the soul and its conversion toward Intellect:[12]

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[12] 1.2 [19] 4.18–25: Τί οὖν [19] τοῦτο; Θέα καὶ τύπος τοῦ ὀφθέντος ἐντεθεὶς καὶ ἐνεργῶν, [20] ὡς ἡ ὄψις περὶ τὸ ὁρώμενον. Οὐκ ἄρα εἶχεν αὐτὰ οὐδ᾽ [21] ἀναμιμνήσκεται; Ἢ εἶχεν οὐκ ἐνεργοῦντα, ἀλλὰ ἀποκείμενα [22] ἀφώτιστα· ἵνα δὲ φωτισθῇ καὶ τότε γνῷ αὐτὰ ἐνόντα, δεῖ [23] προσβαλεῖν

> And what is this? A sight and impression of what is seen implanted and working in it, like the relationship between sight and its object. But did it [viz., the soul] not have the realities which it sees [viz., the intelligibles]? Does it not recollect them? It did have them, yet not active, but lying apart and unilluminated; if they are to be illuminated and it is to know them as present in it, it must thrust towards that which gives them light. It did not have the realities themselves but impressions of them; so it must bring the impressions into accord with the true realities of which they are impressions.

According to this text, to acquire the higher virtues means to activate a connection with the intelligible realm which at this particular stage of the ascent lies only potentially in the soul.[13] But this activation is not possible unless the soul is already purified or converted toward the intelligible through the lower virtues. Therefore, it would seem that what distinguishes the lower virtues from the higher ones is that the former lead to the point at which the individual soul is aware of its kinship with the intelligible and resolutely turns toward pursuing assimilation to it, while the latter are the very practice by which a mere, though necessary, turning toward the intelligible becomes actual knowledge of it.

Thus, in a sense the practice and acquisition of the higher virtues is already the beginning of the process of assimilation to Intellect. This practice is also a process of purification in the sense that in order to become habituated to be effortlessly connected with the intelligible realm, the individual soul ought to master the distractions that come to it from its relation to the body (cf. I.2 [19] 5). Although Plotinus was quite convinced that the soul, being inessentially connected to body, can persist even after the dissolution of the composite in physical death (cf. treatise IV.7 [2]), it will be useful to remind ourselves that both in this and the next stages of the ascent dissociation from the body need not be understood in a literal sense (as I pointed out in my remarks on death and suicide in the previous chapter), at least not immediately. Plotinus makes this clear in chapter 5 of treatise I.2 [19], where the activity of the higher virtues or purifications takes place within the horizon of an embodied existence.

τῷ φωτίζοντι. Εἶχε δὲ οὐκ αὐτά, ἀλλὰ τύπους· [24] δεῖ οὖν τὸν τύπον τοῖς ἀληθινοῖς, ὧν καὶ οἱ τύποι, [25] ἐφαρμόσαι. ARMSTRONG'S translation, slightly modified.

[13] As Catapano (2006, 146–147) comments, here Plotinus loosely borrows from Aristotle the principle that knowledge is not, properly speaking, an alteration (ἀλλοίωσις), but a passage from potency to act (or rather from first to second actuality). See Aristotle, *De anima* II.5.417b5–12; cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima* 86.4–5. For parallels in Plotinus see III.6 [26] 2.34–54, III.9 [13] 5, IV.6 [41] 3.10–16.

In their new—higher—context, the four virtues of the *Republic*, which at the civic level were ordinary practices leading to good social conduct and the realization of one’s kinship with something other than body, are now redefined to fit their higher purpose. Accordingly, at the superior level wisdom (σοφία μὲν καὶ φρόνησις: I.2 [19] 6.12) has no connotation of applied discursive reasoning on the part of the soul, but “consists in the contemplation of that which Intellect contains [viz., the intelligibles], which Intellect has by immediate contact.”[14] The same is true of the other virtues. Justice, far from always requiring a plurality of parts each “minding its own business” (οἰκειοπραγία), belongs here to a unitary entity. Plotinus makes this plain not only about justice but also about temperance and courage. He writes at I.2 [19] 6.22–27:[15]

> True absolute justice is the disposition of a unity to itself, a unity in which there are no different parts. So the higher justice in the soul is its activity towards Intellect, its being temperate is its inward turning to Intellect, its courage is its freedom from affections, in the likeness of that to which it looks which is free of affections by nature [i.e., Intellect], so as to prevent its sharing in the affections of its inferior companion [i.e., the part(s) of the soul lacking reason].

Through achieved purification, the individal soul becomes godlike, joining the condition of the World-Soul, which is able to master its body, the body of the universe, while maintaining its concentration intent on Intellect via the Soul-Hypostasis. In this way, the individual soul is already on the threshold of Intellect.

Let us take a step back and consider what the embodied individual soul has achieved through purification from the vantage point of love. By the habitual practice of virtue the soul has come to realize that its true identity lies away from the body. This does not mean that through such a realization the soul abandons the body or stops taking care of it, but rather that its affective commitment to the body, or the love which the soul invests in an embodied existence, is not (or no longer) its priority. Speaking about the relation of the sage to his body, Plotinus writes at I.4 [46] 4.25–30:[16]

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[14] I.2 [19] 6.12–13: Ἢ σοφία μὲν καὶ φρόνησις ἐν [13] θεωρίᾳ ὧν νοῦς ἔχει· νοῦς δὲ τῇ ἐπαφῇ. The translation is ARMSTRONG’S, with minor changes. Igal (1982–1998, I, 217 note 18) rightly observes that the technical distinction between σοφία and φρόνησις is Aristotelian (see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.3.1139b16–17, chapters 5 and 7, and 12.1143b18–a11), while the meaning of the two terms tends to be blurred in both Plato and Plotinus; so also Catapano (2006, 185–186), who references *Enneads* VI.6 [34] 18.33, I.4 [46] 9.17–18.

[15] I.2 [19] 6.22–27: Ἡ γοῦν ἀληθὴς αὐτοδικαιοσύνη ἑνὸς πρὸς [23] αὑτό, ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ἄλλο, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο· ὥστε καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ [24] δικαιοσύνη ἡ μείζων τὸ πρὸς νοῦν ἐνεργεῖν, τὸ δὲ [25] σωφρονεῖν ἡ εἴσω πρὸς νοῦν στροφή, ἡ δὲ ἀνδρία ἀπάθεια [26] καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν τοῦ πρὸς ὃ βλέπει ἀπαθὲς ὂν τὴν φύσιν, [27] αὐτὴ δὲ ἐξ ἀρετῆς, ἵνα μὴ συμπαθῇ τῷ χείρονι συνοίκῳ. ARMSTRONG’S translation, modified.

> What he seeks he seeks as a necessity, not for himself but for something that belongs to him; that is, he seeks it for the body which is joined to him; and even granting that this is a living body, it lives its own life, and not the life which is that of the good man. He knows its needs and gives it what he gives it without taking away from his own life.

The care of the embodied self for its own sake meant an attachment to something foreign to the soul's nature, since unlike Aristotle, who thought of the soul as the ἐντελέχεια of the body (cf. *De anima* II.1.412a27–28, b4–6), Plotinus maintains that the soul is not necessarily connected to the body. Thus, while for the soul to be erotically or affectively committed to the body is in a sense natural insofar as it is related to a body as the soul of that particular body, in another sense to make of its body a primary matter of concern is a kind of alienation, and specifically an *erotic* alienation: it means for the soul to be affectively directed to something that is not only essentially other than itself, but also ontologically inferior insofar as it lacks permanence and is only the image of a superior kind of unity.

Plotinus seems to be making this point as he describes the feeling of lovers of supersensible beauty at I.6 [1] 5.1–16:[17]

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[16] I.4 [46] 4.25–30: Ἀλλ᾽ ὃ ζητεῖ [26] ὡς ἀναγκαῖον ζητεῖ, καὶ οὐχ αὑτῷ, ἀλλά τινι τῶν αὑτοῦ. [27] Σώματι γὰρ προσηρτημένῳ ζητεῖ· κἂν ζῶντι δὲ σώματι, τὰ [28] αὑτοῦ ζῶντι τούτῳ, οὐχ ἃ τοιούτου τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐστί. [29] Καὶ γινώσκει ταῦτα καὶ δίδωσιν ἃ δίδωσιν οὐδὲν τῆς αὑτοῦ [30] παραιρούμενος ζωῆς.

[17] I.6 [1] 5.1–16: Τῶν δὴ καὶ περὶ τὰ ἐν οὐκ αἰσθήσει ἐρωτικῶν [2] ἀναπυνθάνεσθαι δεῖ τί πάσχετε περὶ τὰ λεγόμενα ἐπιτηδεύματα [3] καλὰ καὶ τρόπους καλοὺς καὶ ἤθη σώφρονα [4] καὶ ὅλως ἔργα ἀρετῆς καὶ διαθέσεις καὶ τὸ τῶν ψυχῶν [5] κάλλος; Καὶ ἑαυτοὺς δὲ ἰδόντες τὰ ἔνδον καλοὺς τί [6] πάσχετε; Καὶ πῶς ἀναβακχεύεσθε καὶ ἀνακινεῖσθε καὶ ἑαυτοῖς [7] συνεῖναι ποθεῖτε συλλεξάμενοι αὑτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν [8] σωμάτων; Πάσχουσι μὲν γὰρ ταῦτα οἱ ὄντως ἐρωτικοί. Τί [9] δέ ἐστι, περὶ ὃ ταῦτα πάσχουσιν; Οὐ σχῆμα, οὐ χρῶμα, [10] οὐ μέγεθός τι, ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχήν, ἀχρώματον μὲν αὐτήν, [11] ἀχρώματον δὲ καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην ἔχουσαν καὶ τὸ ἄλλο τῶν [12] ἀρετῶν φέγγος, ὅταν ἢ ἐν αὑτοῖς ἴδητε, ἢ καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ [13] θεάσησθε μέγεθος ψυχῆς καὶ ἦθος δίκαιον καὶ σωφροσύνην [14] καθαρὰν καὶ ἀνδρίαν βλοσυρὸν ἔχουσαν πρόσωπον καὶ [15] σεμνότητα καὶ αἰδῶ ἐπιθέουσαν ἐν ἀτρεμεῖ καὶ ἀκύμονι καὶ [16] ἀπαθεῖ διαθέσει, ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις τὸν θεοειδῆ νοῦν ἐπιλάμποντα.

> Then we must ask the lovers of that which is outside sense "What do you feel about beautiful ways of life, as we call them, and beautiful habits and well-ordered characters and in general about virtuous activities and dispositions and the beauty of souls?[18] What do you feel when you see your own inward beauty?[19] How are you stirred to wild exultation, and long to be with yourselves, gathering your selves together away from your bodies." For this is what true lovers feel. But what is it that makes them feel like this? Not shape or colour[20] or any size, but soul, without colour itself and possessing a moral order without colour and possessing all the other light of the virtues; you feel like this when you see, in yourself or in someone else, greatness of soul, a righteous life, a pure morality, courage with its noble look,[21] and dignity and modesty advancing in a fearless, calm and unperturbed disposition, and the godlike light of intellect shining upon all this.

In this way, the process of purification reverses the direction of the soul's love from sensible to intelligible reality; but in doing so, at the same time it sharpens its sense of alienation as the soul finds itself subject to what Trouillard calls the "le régime d'extériorité"[22] which is proper to the body and, thus, to its embodied condition. In the further stage of noetic reintegration, the individual soul, turned inwards and having broken its affective ties to what is other than itself through purification, comes to identify with a higher level of unity, Intellect, which for the soul is more intimately itself than the connection with its particular body.

2 Ascent to Intellect: Noetic Reintegration

The central question which I will address in this section is the following: What does it mean for the individual soul to come to abide in Intellect, or to achieve noetic reintegration? In what P. Hadot indicates as the only autobiographical passage in the *Enneads*,[23] IV.8 [6] 1.1–11, Plotinus describes what may[24] be understood as an experience of noetic reintegration:[25]

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[18] This is an allusion to a portion of the ladder of love in Plato, *Symposium* 210b6–c3, which I briefly discussed in Section 4 of Chapter 5.

[19] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 279b9.

[20] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 247c6.

[21] Cf. Homer, *Iliad* VII.212.

[22] Cf. Trouillard (1955b, 28–46).

[23] P. Hadot (1993, 25).

> Many times, awakened to myself away from the body, becoming outside of myself and within myself, seeing a wonderful and great beauty, believing myself then especially to be part of the higher realm, in act as the best life, having become one with the divine and based in it advancing to that activity, establishing myself above all other intelligible beings, then going down from this position in the divine, from intellect down to discursive reasoning, I am puzzled how I could ever, and now, descend, and how my soul has come to be in the body when it is what it has shown itself to be by itself, even when it is in the body.

I will limit my summary treatment of noetic reintegration to the two sides or aspects of this experience, a negative one and a positive one. The negative aspect is the explication of the first general feature of the ascent at this stage, namely, that like in the other stages, also in the soul's assimilation to Intellect there occurs, not the addition, but the subtraction of a feature or element that appears to be foreign to the nature of the soul. Specifically, what is left behind or subtracted is not only all that is bodily, but also all that is connected with the body, such as memory, anticipation, and consciousness of one's embodied condition. The positive aspect will be a brief account of what it means for the individual soul to come to abide or to be reintegrated in the noetic realm, namely, εὐδαιμονία. I will begin with the positive aspect of noetic reintegration.

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[24] Interpreters disagree on whether this passage should be understood as a description of unification with Intellect (what I have been calling "noetic reintegration") or with the One (what I have been referring to as "union"). Among the authors supporting unification with Intellect, which I also tend to favor, are O'Meara (1974; 1993, 104–105), P. Hadot (1987, 14–15), Schroeder (1992, 5–6), Gerson (1994, 292 note 46; 2018, 512 note1), Gatti (1996, 142), Blumenthal (1966, 95); among those supporting unification with the One, see Rist (1967, 56), Bussanich (1988, 188), and more extensively Ousager (2004, 61–66), where one can also find an account of the disagreement.

[25] IV.8 [6] 1.1–11: Πολλάκις ἐγειρόμενος εἰς ἐμαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος [2] καὶ γινόμενος τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἔξω, ἐμαυτοῦ δὲ εἴσω, [3] θαυμαστὸν ἡλίκον ὁρῶν κάλλος, καὶ τῆς κρείττονος μοίρας [4] πιστεύσας τότε μάλιστα εἶναι, ζωήν τε ἀρίστην ἐνεργήσας [5] καὶ τῷ θείῳ εἰς ταὐτὸν γεγενημένος καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἱδρυθεὶς [6] εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἐλθὼν ἐκείνην ὑπὲρ πᾶν τὸ ἄλλο νοητὸν [7] ἐμαυτὸν ἱδρύσας, μετὰ ταύτην τὴν ἐν τῷ θείῳ στάσιν εἰς [8] λογισμὸν ἐκ νοῦ καταβὰς ἀπορῶ, πῶς ποτε καὶ νῦν καταβαίνω, [9] καὶ ὅπως ποτέ μοι ἔνδον ἡ ψυχὴ γεγένηται τοῦ [10] σώματος τοῦτο οὖσα, οἷον ἐφάνη καθ' ἑαυτήν, καίπερ [11] οὖσα ἐν σώματι. The translation of lines 1–9 is by O'Meara (1993, 104); that of lines 10–11 by ARMSTRONG. I agree with O'Meara that Πολλάκις on line 1 should be connected to ἀπορῶ on line 8: "Many times [...] I am puzzled..." This, I believe, stresses that the individual soul is fundamentally related to the noetic realm and that the intensity of the experience of being part of this realm can only give rise to puzzlement as to why the soul would ever depart from Intellect.

The individual soul's entrance into Intellect coincides with what for Plotinus is happiness or well-being (εὐδαιμονία), the subject of treatise I.4 [46].[26] To put it another way, *eudaimonia* is the life of the individual soul in Intellect, or as a member of Intellect. It will probably be hard to deny that ordinarily, from the perspective of the embodied and as yet unpurified individual soul, life in Intellect must sound either like harmless fancy at best or, at worst, like a dangerous form of madness. For this reason the process of reintegration in the noetic realm cannot take place prior to purification, without which the individual soul would fail to reform its affective commitments and in all probability would not be able to appreciate even the possibility of noetic life.

The kind of life that is *eudaimonia* is in principle available to every human being and the one who succeeds in making it actual is called a sage (σπουδαῖος).[27] Plotinus spends the first two chapters of I.4 [46] to refute Aristotelian, Epicurean, and Stoic doctrines about *eudaimonia*. His main contention against Aristotle and those who agree with him is that if *eudaimonia* is equated either to living well (Τὸ εὖ ζῆν: I.4 [46] 1.1) or to the achievement of the end (τέλος: I.4 [46] 1.10) of the desires which living beings possess by nature (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.8.1098b20–21, *Magna Moralia* I.4.1184b22–30, *Eudemian Ethics* II.1.1219b1–2), then we will have to admit that even animals and plants can be *eudaimon*, which goes against what he takes to be Aristotle's own contention (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* I.9.1099b32–1100a4, X.8.1178b24–28). Against the Stoics (and, more obviously, the Epicureans for the primacy they assigned to pleasure), Plotinus argues that their denying *eudaimonia* to plants on account of their lack of sensation (I.4 [46] 1.21–23) mistakenly emphasizes the importance of sensation in *eudaimonia* (cf. I.4 [46] 2.1–31; for the Stoics, cf. Epictetus, *Discourses* II.8.5; for the Epicureans, cf. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127 = Usener 1887, 62.8–12; *Letter to Herodotus* 82 = Usener 1887, 31.3–10). And although Chrysippus and the Stoics in general recognize the importance of rational life for *eudaimonia* (cf. SVF III.687), their emphasis on "primary natural needs," or primary things according to nature (τὰ πρῶτα κατὰ φύσιν: Plotinus I.4 [46] 2.37, 40–41; cf. SVF III.140–141; SVF III.181, 43.38–44.1), either subordinates reason to the pursuit of what satisfy these needs, or else, if it does not, still results in the failure to provide a satisfactory account of rational life (Plotinus I.4 [46] 2.31–46) and, as a consequence, of *eudaimonia*.

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[26] On the difficulty of providing a proper rendering of the pregnant term εὐδαιμονία, see McGroarty (2006, 40–41), the author of a full commentary on treatise I.4 [46] to which I will be referring occasionally in the next few pages, and to which I am indebted for some of the extra Plotinian references related to this treatise. Following McGroarty's lead, from this point on I will transliterate the terms εὐδαιμονία (*eudaimonia*) and εὐδαίμων (*eudaimon*), and use the term "eudaimonic" to signify that which pertains to *eudaimonia* and the *eudaimon*. Cf. ARMSTRONG (I, 170–171 note 1).

[27] On the notion of σπουδαῖος see Schniewind (2003).

Next, Plotinus moves on to provide a sketch of his view of eudaimonic life in Intellect in the next two chapters, I.4 [46] 3–4. He insists that *eudaimonia* should not be understood as life in general, or as a feature that is common to all that is living, nor is it rational life as a species of the genus life; instead, it is rational life understood as life at its best, or as that life of which all other forms of life are traces or images. On this basis, it follows that among individual souls in the sensible universe *eudaimonia* will be available only to those souls that are in a position to partake in reason, that is, keeping in mind my discussion of the subject of the ascent in the previous chapter, human souls. Plotinus writes at I.4 [46] 3.33–40:[28]

> We have often said that the perfect life, the true, real life, is in that intelligible nature, and that other lives are incomplete, traces of life, not [life] perfectly or purely and no more life than its opposite. And now let us put it shortly; as long as all living things proceed from a single source, but have not life to the same degree as it, the origin must be the first and most perfect life.

Another important aspect of *eudaimonia* is its close connection with the distinctively Plotinian doctrine of the undescended (part of the) soul. As we saw, Plotinus maintains that our best part never leaves the intelligible realm, but as one might infer from the passages from V.1 [10] 12 and IV.8 [6] 1 cited earlier in this section and in Section 4 of Chapter 5, embodied souls do not seem to be always in touch with this part (cf. also I.4 [46] 9.17–30, IV.3 [27] 30.11–16). Thus, even if it is true that our best part abides in Intellect in a permanent status of *eudaimonia*, in our embodied condition we are only intermittently aware of it, if at all, and hence we are only potentially connected with it. The explanation of this connection in terms of potentiality and actuality is precisely what we find in the fourth chapter of the treatise on *eudaimonia*. We read at I.4 [46] 4.6–17:[29]

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[28] I.4 [46] 3.33–40: Ὅτι δ' ἡ τελεία [34] ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀληθινὴ καὶ ὄντως ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ νοερᾷ φύσει, [35] καὶ ὅτι αἱ ἄλλαι ἀτελεῖς καὶ ἰνδάλματα ζωῆς καὶ οὐ [36] τελείως οὐδὲ καθαρῶς καὶ οὐ μᾶλλον ζωαὶ ἢ [37] τοὐναντίον, πολλάκις μὲν εἴρηται· καὶ νῦν δὲ λελέχθω συντόμως [38] ὡς, ἕως ἂν πάντα τὰ ζῶντα ἐκ μιᾶς ἀρχῆς ᾖ, μὴ ἐπίσης [39] δὲ τὰ ἄλλα ζῇ, ἀνάγκη τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν πρώτην ζωὴν καὶ [40] τὴν τελειοτάτην εἶναι. Translation by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified.

[29] I.4 [46] 4.6–17: ἔχει τελείαν ζωὴν ἄνθρωπος οὐ [7] τὴν αἰσθητικὴν μόνον ἔχων, ἀλλὰ καὶ λογισμὸν καὶ νοῦν [8] ἀληθινόν, δῆλον καὶ ἐξ ἄλλων. Ἀλλ' ἆρά γε ὡς ἄλλος ὢν [9] ἄλλο τοῦτο ἔχει; Ἢ οὐδ' ἔστιν ὅλως ἄνθρωπος μὴ οὐ καὶ [10] τοῦτο ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐνεργείᾳ ἔχων, ὃν δὴ καί

> …man has perfect life by having not only sense-life, but reasoning and true intelligence. But is he different from this when he has it? No, he is not a man at all unless he has this, either potentially or actually (and if he has it actually we say that he is in a state of *eudaimonia*). But shall we say that he has this perfect kind of life in him as a part of himself? Other men, we maintain, who have it potentially, have it as a part, but the man who is already *eudaimon*, who actually is this and has passed over into identity with it, [does not have it but] *is* this. Everything else is just something he wears; you could not call it part of him because he wears it without wanting to; it would be his if he united it to him by an act of the will.

Here again the gap that exists between oneself at the embodied level and one’s better, undescended part can be understood in desiderative or erotic terms. As Plotinus goes on to explain in the rest of the chapter, to actualize one’s connection to the undescended soul means to reintegrate oneself in it, or to achieve a condition of self-sufficiency (I.4 [46] 4.23: Αὐτάρκης), in which nothing alien is desired simply because it is not (or no longer) found worth desiring in comparison with what one deliberately wills to be (I.4 [46] 4.17: κατὰ βούλησιν) and actually has become. The gap between what one has come to identify with and one’s desideratum has been reduced to a minimum: one *is* what one used to desire as other than oneself. However, in Plotinus’ universe this newly achieved identification is in fact a *re*-integration into what each individual human soul always already was in its highest part as a member of the intelligible universe. At III.4 [15] 3.21–27, Plotinus says quite explicitly that our soul does not merely belong essentially to the noetic realm, but that in being in it, it *is* it: “we are each of us an intelligible universe” (ἐσμὲν ἕκαστος κόσμος νοητός: III.4 [15] 3.22). He develops this idea in two passages, IV.7 [2] 10.32–37 and VI.5 [23] 7.1–8. The first passage, IV.7 [2] 10.32–37, reads (the emphasis in the translation is mine):[30]

φαμεν [11] εὐδαίμονα εἶναι. Ἀλλ’ ὡς μέρος αὐτοῦ τοῦτο φήσομεν ἐν αὐτῷ [12] τὸ εἶδος τῆς ζωῆς τὸ τέλειον εἶναι; Ἢ τὸν μὲν ἄλλον [13] ἄνθρωπον μέρος τι τοῦτο ἔχειν δυνάμει ἔχοντα, τὸν δὲ [14] εὐδαίμονα ἤδη, ὃς δὴ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ ἐστὶ τοῦτο καὶ [15] μεταβέβηκε πρὸς τὸ αὐτό, εἶναι τοῦτο· περικεῖσθαι δ’ αὐτῷ τὰ [16] ἄλλα ἤδη, ἃ δὴ οὐδὲ μέρη αὐτοῦ ἄν τις θεῖτο οὐκ ἐθέλοντι [17] περικείμενα· ἦν δ’ ἂν αὐτοῦ κατὰ βούλησιν συνηρτημένα. ARMSTRONG’S translation, minimally modified.

[30] IV.7 [2] 10.32–37: Ὄψεται γὰρ [33] νοῦν ὁρῶντα οὐκ αἰσθητόν τι οὐδὲ τῶν θνητῶν τούτων, [34] ἀλλὰ ἀιδίῳ τὸ ἀίδιον κατανοοῦντα, πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ [35] νοητῷ, κόσμον καὶ αὐτὸν νοητὸν καὶ φωτεινὸν γεγενημένον, [36] ἀληθείᾳ καταλαμπόμενον τῇ παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὃ [37] πᾶσιν ἐπιλάμπει τοῖς νοητοῖς ἀλήθειαν.

> For he will see an intellect which sees nothing perceived by the senses, none of these mortal things, but apprehends the eternal by its eternity, and all the things in the intelligible world, *having become itself an intelligible universe* full of light, illuminated by the truth from the Good, which radiates truth over all the intelligibles.

And here is the second passage, VI.5 [23] 7.1–8 (the emphasis in the translation is again mine):[31]

> For we and what is ours go back to real being and ascend to that and to the first which comes from it, and we think the intelligibles; we do not have images or imprints of them. But if we do not, *we are the intelligibles*. If then we have a part of true knowledge, *we are those*; we do not apprehend them as distinct within ourselves, but *we are within them*. For since the *others*, and not only ourselves, *are* those, *we are all those*. So then, being together with all things, *we are those; so then, we are all and one*.

What we may gather from these texts is that for the individual soul *eudaimonia* does not simply mean the complete assimilation to Intellect understood as something essentially different from soul, as if this state were an experience in the etymological sense of going beyond certain boundaries, into a sphere which is external to, or wholly other than, soul. It is rather a *re*-integration into something that is most intimately itself. For the individual soul this is indeed a departure, yet not from itself, but form all that in it is less than noetic. Therefore, it is a departure that is at the same time a return to what in the soul is most purely itself.

Perhaps the process of reintegration in Intellect will appear less puzzling than it seems at first if one tries to think of it in terms of the Principle of Prior Actuality. The individual soul would not be able to be fully reintegrated as a member of the intelligible realm unless this realm already existed in it somehow, even if, from the soul's embodied perspective, it exists only as a dormant possibility. But as we saw when I first introduced the Principle of Prior Actuality in Chapter 1, the potential presupposes the existence of that with respect to which it is potential, its corresponding actuality. In other words, for a possibility to be a real possibility, its corresponding actuality ought to be granted as prior in being to it. Failing to do so would seem to lead to lack of order or utter randomness both in the chain of causation and in that of explanation—a view which, as the treatise on providence (III.2–3 [47–48]) and other passages from the *Enneads* clearly indicate, Plotinus wishes to avoid. Here again the image of the soul as a statue (ἄγαλμα: I.6 [1] 9.13), which one does not bring into existence by one's own means but rather restores to its original beauty by eliminating what does not belong to its nature, is appropriate. For the process of elimination actualizes the statue only in the sense that it brings it back to its original state, but the actuality of the statue itself precedes this process and constitutes the most important necessary condition of its restoration.

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[31] VI.5 [23] 7.1–8: Ἀνάγεται γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἡμέτερον καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς τὸ ὄν, [2] καὶ ἀναβαίνομέν τε εἰς ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνου, [3] καὶ νοοῦμεν ἐκεῖνα οὐκ εἴδωλα αὐτῶν οὐδὲ τύπους ἔχοντες. [4] Εἰ δὲ μὴ τοῦτο, ὄντες ἐκεῖνα. Εἰ οὖν ἀληθινῆς ἐπιστήμης [5] μετέχομεν, ἐκεῖνά ἐσμεν οὐκ ἀπολαβόντες αὐτὰ ἐν ἡμῖν [6] ἀλλ᾽ ἡμεῖς ἐν ἐκείνοις ὄντες. Ὄντων δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, οὐ [7] μόνον ἡμῶν, ἐκεῖνα, πάντες ἐσμὲν ἐκεῖνα. Ὁμοῦ ἄρα [8] ὄντες μετὰ πάντων ἐσμὲν ἐκεῖνα· πάντα ἄρα ἐσμὲν ἕν. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, minimally modified.

We come, then, to the second aspect of noetic reintegration I introduced earlier in this section, what I called its negative aspect. Just like all movement to a higher stage of the ascent, reintegration in Intellect implies a subtraction: one's statue takes on its full shape only by the chipping away of superfluous materials that disguise its true nature. We ask: What are these "materials" that need to be eliminated at the level of noetic reintegration? Certainly they cannot be the individuality or particularity of a given soul in its highest part, since this part permanently subsists in Intellect as a member of the intelligible. What is left behind at this stage are rather the memories related to one's bodily existence. In his treatment of memory, covering twenty full chapters of his lengthy treatise *On Difficulties about the Soul* (IV.3–5 [27–29]), Plotinus first establishes that memory belongs to the soul rather than to the composite and that its seat is the power of imagination, τὸ φανταστικόν (IV.3 [27] 25–32). He then goes on to argue that when the individual soul has entirely identified itself with its highest part and has come wholly to abide in the intelligible, memory must be absent there because the way of being of Intellect is timelessness or eternity: in it everything is present wholly at once without any transition, and the highest soul abiding in Intellect has a unified apprehension of all its objects (IV.4 [28] 1).

In the first chapter of *On Memory and Recollection*, Aristotle remarks that memory is neither of the present nor of the future but only of the past, and that time and the consciousness of time are necessary conditions of memory (*On Memory and Recollection* 1.449b15–30). For Plotinus temporality does not belong to Intellect, which is a *totus simul*, both as the identity of thinker and object of thought, and as the simultaneousness and reciprocal implication of the totality of the intelligibles. As we saw at the end of Section 2 of Chapter 2, this is roughly what it means for Intellect to be eternal. Thus, if the way of being of Intellect is eternity, it follows that there cannot be memory in it nor, consequently, for the soul that has achieved noetic reintegration[32] (unless this soul decides to reactualize its memories by leaving Intellect; cf. IV. 4 [28] 3–5). In fact, Plotinus thinks that the soul which has achieved noetic reintegration will not even have memory of itself, but will be given over completely to its object of contemplation (θεωρία) and will be one with it. And since the object of contemplation of the noetically reintegrated soul is the soul itself as belonging to the realm of Intellect, in contemplating itself the soul simultaneously contemplates the entire noetic dimension (IV.4 [28] 2). Plotinus puts it sharply at IV.4 [28] 2.10–14:[33]

> But if he is himself in such a way as to be everything, when he thinks himself, he thinks everything at once; so that a man in this state, by his intuition of himself, and when he actually sees himself, has everything included in this seeing, and by his intuition of everything has himself included.

We might borrow Gerson's expression, which he applies to his own interpretation of the Form of an individual as a disembodied intellect, and say that in noetic reintegration the individual soul becomes "cognitively identical with all Forms."[34]

There is more. Absence of memory in Intellect is strictly related to absence of consciousness. By consciousness I mean not only the ordinary awareness of one's embodied condition, which as such is obviously foreign to noetic activity, but more radically the apprehension (ἀντίληψις) of the very noetic activity taking place in noetic reintegration. Thus, at IV.3 [27] 30.13–16 Plotinus writes:[35]

> The intellectual act is one thing and the apprehension of it another, and we are always intellectually active, but do not always apprehend our

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[32] Here Plotinus is fundamentally in agreement with Aristotle, who also appears to concede this much at *De anima* I.4.408b25–30. However, Plotinus denies that intellection requires the presence of an image (φαντασία, φάντασμα; see I.4 [46] 10.17–21), as Aristotle seems to contend in *On Memory and Recollection* 1.449b31–450a1 (cf. Igal 1982–1998, II, 369 note 223) and perhaps in *De anima* III.7.431a16–17 (but see Sachs 2001, 146 note 17, who rightly points out that Aristotle's claim occurs in the specific context of thinking about pursuing and avoiding something).

[33] IV.4 [28] 2.10–14: Εἰ δέ ἐστιν αὐτὸς τοιοῦτος [11] οἷος πάντα εἶναι, ὅταν αὑτὸν νοῇ, πάντα ὁμοῦ νοεῖ· ὥστε [12] τῇ μὲν εἰς ἑαυτὸν ὁ τοιοῦτος ἐπιβολῇ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ ἑαυτὸν [13] ὁρῶν τὰ πάντα ἐμπεριεχόμενα ἔχει, τῇ δὲ πρὸς τὰ πάντα [14] ἐμπεριεχόμενον ἑαυτόν.

[34] Gerson (1994, 75).

[35] IV.3 [27] 30.13–16: Ἄλλο γὰρ ἡ νόησις, καὶ ἄλλο [14] ἡ τῆς νοήσεως ἀντίληψις, καὶ νοοῦμεν μὲν ἀεί, ἀντιλαμβανόμεθα [15] δὲ οὐκ ἀεί· τοῦτο δέ, ὅτι τὸ δεχόμενον οὐ μόνον [16] δέχεται νοήσεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἰσθήσεις κατὰ θάτερα.

> activity; and this is because that which receives it does not only receive acts of intellection, but also, on its side, perceptions.

As Armstrong rightly comments in a note on this passage, "consciousness in the ordinary sense, with memory, is thus secondary, dependent on our own physical condition, and relatively unimportant. As it appears in an early, a middle-period, and a late treatise, Plotinus seems to have held this doctrine consistently throughout his writing period."[36] From this passage one might infer that we can in fact become reflectively aware of the noetic activity of our higher part, but since such awareness implies discursivity, awareness cannot itself belong to or constitute noetic activity.[37]

Perhaps more importantly for our topic, what has been said of memory applies also to anticipation understood as an intrinsically temporal phenomenon (cf. I.5 [36] 2). Thus, due to the way of being of Intellect (i.e., eternity), not only is there no memory in it, but there is also no anticipation, since as a member of the intelligible the noetically reintegrated soul has a simultaneous grasp of the totality of Being and is constantly directed toward the One and engaged in the activity of replicating the superior unity of the Principle at the noetic level. However, I believe it would be mistaken to think that absence of anticipation must imply absence of love witouth qualification. We should rather say that lack of anticipation entails absence of love only in its ordinarily appetitive aspect, not absence of love altogether. The reason for this is that the love of the noetically reintegrated soul is no longer directed toward desiderata which, because of their transient nature, will cause it to be restless and are ultimately bound to frustrate it. In other words, noetic *eros* is a kind of love that is no longer wanting: no longer a need or a lack. Thus, in Intellect *eros* has the character of *fulfilled* love, love unswervingly directed to and permanently in possession of its desideratum, the One, which unfailingly sparks it and sustains it. For the same reason, if *eudaimonia* coincides with the condition of the individual soul fully integrated in its higher part in the intelligible realm, it must follow that such a condition is complete, and nothing can be added to it to increase it or perfect it as that particular condition. Thus, in the short treatise I.5 [36] *On whether eudaimonia increases with time*, Plotinus answers the indirect question posed in its title negatively, for if *eudaimonia* is the soul's reintegration in the life of Intellect, and if the proper way of being of Intellect is eternity, hence absence of time, it follows that the one who is truly *eudaimon* will not become more *eudaimon* with the passing of time, simply because time is not of the essence of *eudaimonia*.[38]

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[36] ARMSTRONG (IV, 130–131 note 1). The passages that Armstrong has in mind are IV.8 [6] 8 for the early period (i.e., prior to Porphyry's move to Rome), the chapter from which I extrapolated the present passage, IV.3 [27] 30, for the middle period (i.e., during Porphyry's stay in Rome), and I.4 [46] 9–10 for the late period (i.e., after Porphyry's departure from Rome); cf. also V.1 [10] 12.

[37] Cf. Gerson (1994, 270 note 32).

It would seem that with noetic reintegration the individual rational soul has achieved its highest feat: its reinstatement in a realm, the realm of Intellect, to which it belongs by nature. But this is not the case according to Plotinus. The very fact that Intellect is in its essence an attempt to replicate the unqualified unity of the One already means that Intellect is not identical with that unity. Accordingly, even in the identity of thinker and what is thought, which constitutes the nature of Intellect, there is still left a minimum of multiplicity, that is, both the duality of thinker and intelligibles and the plurality of the intelligibles themselves. This is due to the fact that, although Intellect (and, in it, the noetically reintegrated soul) is permanently in possession of its desideratum, this possession is of a mediated kind, for Intellect is not truly united *with* the One, but only possesses it reflectively in the activity of thinking the intelligibles *toto simul*, as a perfectly unified totality (cf. V.3 [49] 11). For this reason, the *eros* of Intellect is still something other than its activity (i.e., thinking), and a gap still remains between the essential orientation of its being and that of its love. For its being (i.e., self-thinking thought, whereby the unity of the One is replicated in noetic mode) is simultaneously an immanent affair (i.e., not merely thought, but *self*-thinking thought) and an index of the fact that the unqualified unity that permanently inspires it and sustains it—the One—ultimately escapes it, since it is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (Plato, *Republic* VI.509b9). The fact that Intellect and the intelligibles are mutually implicating but really distinct is but an indication of the minimal but all-important distance that still separates Intellect from the One, or their modes of unity, noetic and unqualified respectively. Noetic love, by contrast, is not self-contained, but is directed beyond itself, toward the transcendent One, and is the very condition of possibility of Intellect's activity, for without it, Intellect could not even emerge as the second hypostasis.

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[38] A similar point may be made about memory. In the last three chapters of treatise I.5 [36] chapters 8–10, Plotinus asks whether memory of the past can increase *eudaimonia*, particularly in the case of memories of virtue and intelligence and memories of pleasures and noble actions. Unsurprisingly, his reply to this question is again negative. Memories of virtue and intelligence do not increase one's present condition of *eudaimonia* because this condition entails a greater—in fact, the greatest—degree of virtue and intelligence. Memories of past pleasures do not increase *eudaimonia* either, since pleasure is something that is essentially realized in the present and according to Plotinus nothing is added to it by a mere memory of it (I.5 [36] 8). As for memories of noble actions, they too do not increase *eudaimonia*, even if one were to have a longer time to accomplish a greater number of such actions. The reason for this is that it is not noble actions, however many

This view of Intellect is at the same time a criticism of Aristotle, who identifies the best sort of life with thinking (νόησις) and is unwilling to admit that even this life is not perfectly one, for as Gerson explains, it "possesses a fundamental feature of every other life imperfectly one, namely, desire."[39] Plotinus puts it sharply at V.6 [24] 5.8–10: "And this is what thinking is, a movement toward the Good in its desire of the Good; for the desire generates thought and establishes it in being along with itself: for desire of sight is seeing."[40] Desire is a kind of lack of the desired object, which for Intellect is expressed in the fact that the intelligibles, themselves already multiple, are one with it and yet are not perfectly identical with it, for thinking as such implies a minimal distance from what it thinks. And as I already pointed out, this minimal distance between Intellect and intelligibles is indicative of its imperfect unity, or the fact that its *eros*, unlike henologic *eros*, is not truly one, but is a desire "to be perfectly what its own eternal activity shows it to be imperfectly, namely, a unity."[41] Perfect unity, by contrast, is the One, other than Intellect (as in V.6 [24] 5.8–10), or beyond Intellect (V.4 [7] 2.2–3). Gerson perceptively concludes: "Desire precedes thinking in the order of explanation. Desire itself defines the relationship between a multiplicity and its principle. Since finite being is multiple, there is nothing more fundamental within being than desire,"[42] even in the true Being that is Intellect—in fact, most intensely there.

From this it follows that the condition of accomplished noetic reintegration is one in which the individual soul, thoroughly assimilated to its higher part and a member of the intelligible realm, shares in both the activity and the *eros* of Intellect as two aspects of the same condition. Its activity is the simultaneous cognitive grasp of all the intelligibles and of itself as one of the intelligibles (as seen in the two passages cited earlier, IV.7 [2] 10.32–37 and VI.5 [23] 7.1–8), while its *eros* is *fulfilled* love, in the sense that it permanently possesses its desideratum. It possesses it, however, not by being one with it, but in a mediated way, namely, as mirrored or reflected in the act of thinking,

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one might perform, that cause *eudaimonia* and the kind of pleasure connected with it, but one's inner disposition (I.5 [36] 9–10); as Plotinus observes, "[t]o place *eudaimonia* [τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν] in action is to locate it in something outside virtue and the soul" (I.5 [36] 10.20–22). For a commentary on I.5 [36] 8–10 see Linguiti (2007, 97–106; cf. also notes in Linguiti 2000, 135–138).

[39] Gerson (1990, 199).

[40] V.6 [24] 5.8–10: Καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι νοεῖν, κίνησις πρὸς ἀγαθὸν [9] ἐφιέμενον ἐκείνου· ἡ γὰρ ἔφεσις τὴν νόησιν ἐγέννησε καὶ [10] συνυπέστησεν αὐτῇ· ἔφεσις γὰρ ὄψεως ὅρασις. This passage both echoes and modifies Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.7.1072a29–30; cf. also Plotinus V.3 [49] 10.49–52.

[41] Gerson (1990, 199).

[42] Gerson (1990, 200).

in the permanently unified totality of the intelligibles and that which thinks them. In fact, Intellect can be this perfectly unified totality precisely because it unceasingly beholds the absolute unity of the Principle, of which it is a noetic replica. The unity of Intellect, therefore, is as perfect a unity as one can envision in a multiplicity, but it is still the unity of a multiplicity. If the individual soul is to overcome this last remainder of multiplicity and become *eros*, purely and simply, in union with the Good, one final step ought to be taken and one last stage reached.

2.1 *A Note on Ethics and Dialectic in the Context of the Ascent*

Before we turn our attention to union, the final stage of the ascent, I shall briefly comment on two issues in Plotinus which are related to both virtue (the stage of purification) and *eudaimonia* (the stage of noetic reintegration): ethics or morality, and philosophy or dialectic.

The question of the status of ethics in Plotinus's thought has been the subject of several studies, although even a mere attempt to deal with it would take us too far afield from our main topic.[43] For this reason, I will limit my remarks to some objections which the modern or contemporary reader may be inclined to raise against the type of ethics espoused by Plotinus. For what is likely to bother some of the readers who study the *Enneads* not only as a historical relic but also as philosophy, or a possible source of inspiration on how to live a certain kind of life, is precisely Plotinus' attitude toward ethics. Specifically, there are four aspects of the issue that seem to be worrisome: first, whether Plotinus' ethics is elitist (i.e., whether it can be practiced only by certain individuals); next, whether its focus on transcendence comes at the expense of immanence (i.e., in simpler terms, as a failure to work at making this world a better place); third, whether it values other human beings for themselves, each for his or her own sake; lastly, whether it is realistic (i.e., whether what it suggests or prescribes is capable of actually being achieved by a human individual).

First, if by calling Plotinus' ethics "elitist" one means that outward ethical behavior is possible only for those individuals who are committed to pursuing assimilation to higher realities, I do not think that Plotinian ethics is elitist. On the one hand, I see no reason to deny that someone who is unaware of one's connection to higher realities could still behave in accordance with what might be broadly recognized as a virtuous code of conduct, for instance through some state resulting either from temperament or from habituation,[44] although more would have to be said about the precise extent to which such behavior would constitute virtue for Plotinus. *Eudaimonia*, on the other hand, is possible only as the identification with one's higher or ideal self in the noetic realm, and, as we saw in Section 5 of Chapter 5 in reference to all stages of the ascent, it cannot be achieved without the stage that precedes it, purification. But on the basis of the doctrine of the undescended part of the soul, this possibility is in principle open to all human souls (and, if Plotinus genuinely endorses the doctrine of reincarnation, to all individual souls: see Section 2 of Chapter 5). Thus, to call Plotinus' position elitist merely on account of the inability of some individual souls to purify themselves so as to be reintegrated in their better part, probably would be just as unreasonable as to label as elitist the requirement that in order to be able to play on a professional football team, one has to be in possession of (at least some) superior football skills. Desiring the end, one ought to desire (and work) to possess the means to that end as well; otherwise, the very desire for the end as a truly final end becomes questionable, as Plotinus seems to imply in his criticism of the Gnostics to which I referred earlier (II.9 [33] 15.18–40). One may object that some souls lack the most basic external conditions that would favor purification and the pursuit of *eudaimonia*. Plotinus seems to have little regard for this objection (though not for such souls: see my next two points), since in his view every soul occupies its proper place in the universe according to a providential plan (cf. for instance III.2 [47] 12).[45]

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[43] Besides the commentaries on treatises dealing explicitly with *eudaimonia* and virtue (see particularly: Catapano 2006 on 1.2 [19]; Linguiti 2000 and McGroarty 2006 on 1.4 [46]; Linguiti 2000 and 2007 on 1.5 [36]), the following are worth noting: Pistorius (1952, 134–146), Rist (1976), Dillon (1983; 1999), Gerson (1994, 185–202), Smith (1999b), Schniewind (2003; 2005), Remes (2006), Song (2009), Emilsson (2017, 296–334).

Second, is the sage (σπουδαῖος) less concerned about this world because of his or her focus, or intent concentration, on the noetic dimension (VP 9.17: τὴν πρὸς τὸν νοῦν τάσιν)? If one considers that assimilation is, initially, assimilation to that god which is the World-Soul and that the relation of the World-Soul to the sensible cosmos is characterized chiefly as Providence (see particularly the treatise on the subject, divided in two parts by Porphyry: III.2–3 [47–48]), it seems hard to imagine that the sage, precisely insofar as he or she is a sage, will not care for the sensible universe in all its aspects. On the contrary, Plotinus consistently promotes a positive attitude toward the cosmos, including human beings as part of it (besides the treatise on Providence I just mentioned, see his extensive critique of the Gnostics' negative attitude toward the sensible world in II.9 [33]). In IV.4 [28] 39, Plotinus argues that even the works of virtue are woven in the order of the universe, and from VI.8 [39] 1–6 one can reasonably infer that to be truly free as an embodied individual means to cooperate with the World-Soul in the providential ordering of the cosmos. The mere fact that Plotinus highlights the necessity even of lower virtue for "deification" should at the very least allow us to requalify the otherwise hard-to-miss otherworldliness of his thought. Once more, as I pointed out in the last section of the previous chapter, in ascending the individual soul cannot skip stages, and lower virtue is one such stage.[46]

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[44] Aristotle (*History of Animals* I.1.488b12–28), for instance, seems to attribute virtuous traits to animals, and Olympiodorus (*Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* VIII.2.2–9) refers to him in his explanation of the division between natural (φυσικαί) and moral (ἠθικαί) virtues.

[45] It is this last idea, I sense, that offends our modern sensibility—presumably with some good reason—more (or rather) than the fact that *eudaimonia* requires assimilation to higher reality, and hence purification. I do not know whether the next two points will succeed in making Plotinus less unpalatable to modern sensibility, but they should be kept in mind.

Third, based both on the previous point and on Plotinus' own practice, highlighted by Porphyry and briefly discussed in the opening paragraphs of Section 1 of this chapter, it is fair to conclude that the Plotinian sage would be genuinely concerned about the welfare of others. However, this is different from saying that each human being, here understood as an embodied self, is valued for his or her own sake, and so in this sense I believe that the answer to the third question is negative. If, on the other hand, valuing others for their own sake means to contribute to their efforts to achieve union with the One, the answer would have to be positive, since in Plotinus' philosophy morality is not prized for itself but only as a necessary means to union.

Finally, to ask whether Plotinus' ethics is realistic means to doubt whether purification and *eudaimonia* as he envisions them can ever be achieved by a human being. The doubt is fair and, given the counterintuitive character of some of Plotinus' views on the subject (e.g., when in I.4 [46] 13 he claims that external circumstances will not hinder the sage in his activities and thoughts, so much so that even if he were to find himself in the notorious bull of Phalaris, he still would not be deprived of the vision of the Good[47]), even natural. However, this doubt should be directed primarily to Plotinus' metaphysics and psychology, since it is on these that his ethics depends. Only if his metaphysical and psychological views are found to be untenable will his ethics and view of *eudaimonia* become questionable. But to be questionable in this context should be taken to mean that as human beings we are without doubt incapable of ethics and *eudaimonia* as Plotinus conceives them on the basis of his metaphysics and psychology, not that what we may be capable of is perceived as unsatisfactory or incredible at the level of the composite.[48]

The second issue that is central to both purification and the process leading to noetic reintegration is philosophy or the practice of dialectic, to which we may more simply refer to as arguments and demonstrations. Arguments and demonstrations are important both for noetic reintegration and for purification whether Plotinus seriously endorsed reincarnation or not (cf. again my discussion in Section 2 of Chapter 5). If he did not, it would not be any soul, but a *rational* soul that is engaged in the ascent, and so it would be natural to assume that dialectic should play an important role in the ascent. If, on other hand, Plotinus did endorse reincarnation, even if an individual soul were embodied in a form of life ranking lower than human life in his metaphysical hierarchy, it would seem that its ascent will still have to pass through the level of rationality, and so in this case, too, arguments and demonstrations would be vital in the journey. Either way, both purification and the process leading to noetic reintegration will have to be supplemented by arguments and demonstrations understood not so much as mere mental exercises, but as themselves a method of ascent which have the power to contribute to establish conviction about the truthfulness of the goal of the journey. Plotinus is quite explicit about this point as he writes at I.3 [20] 1.1–5:[49]

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[46] Cf. Song (2009, 95–158) for a treatment of the virtuous involvement of the sage in the world.

[47] For a commentary on I.4 [46] 13, see McGroarty (2006, 171–176); see also notes in Linguiti (2000, 119–120).

[48] For a lucid exposition of this point see Gerson (1994, 185–191).

> What art is there, what method or practice, which will take us up there where we must go? That where we must go is to the Good, the First Principle, we take as agreed and established by many demonstrations; and the demonstrations themselves were a kind of means to ascend.

From this perspective, one could read the entirety of the *Enneads* not only as a series of treatises about various philosophical topics, but more fundamentally as an arsenal of arguments and demonstrations aimed at facilitating the ascent to the One. If this is plausible, it can be argued that both purification and the process of noetic reintegration must include the efforts by which the individual soul strives to familiarize itself with all such arguments and demonstrations and become affectively committed to what these are meant to establish as true. It is a question of commitment to our rational nature, which as such seems to require that we rationally justify as much as we are capable of what we consider to be the best way of life in the present condition.

This claim does not contradict the idea that the ascent is essentially erotic in nature, or that it is primarily by educating its *eros* that the individual soul may succeed in returning to the One, for even while the soul is engaged in arguments, its focus must be maintained on what the arguments are meant to establish and clarify. Becoming erotically or affectively committed to what arguments strive to establish as true is crucial, for without such commitment, the arguments would not be substantially different from pleasant diversions and pastimes, in which we engage merely to entertain ourselves. Moreover, since arguments and demonstrations are discursive in nature, the extent of their usefulness is limited, for if the soul ever succeeds in becoming reintegrated in Intellect, it will be at home with the totality of truth and will no longer need to support it through demonstration. Therefore, it is only while one is on the way to noetic reintegration that that arguments and the practice of dialectic, or philosophy, are necessary; but once that higher level is reached and the soul has come to abide among the "divine realities" (Plotinus V.1 [10] 7.49), arguments and demonstrations are superseded. This is a further illustration of the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation, according to which that in which something (i.e., in this case, the individual rational soul) participates (i.e., in this case, Intellect) is other than that because of which it participates in it (i.e., in this case, arguments and demonstrations).[50]

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[49] I.3 [20] 1.1–5: Τίς τέχνη ἢ μέθοδος ἢ ἐπιτήδευσις ἡμᾶς οἷ δεῖ [2] πορευθῆναι ἀνάγει; Ὅπου μὲν οὖν δεῖ ἐλθεῖν, ὡς ἐπὶ [3] τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν πρώτην, κείσθω [4] διωμολογημένον καὶ διὰ πολλῶν δεδειγμένον· καὶ δὴ καὶ δι᾽ ὧν [5] τοῦτο ἐδείκνυτο, ἀναγωγή τις ἦν. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, slightly modified. Cf. Armstrong (1967, 260), O'Meara (1993, 104).

3 Ascent to the One: Union

According to Plotinus the possibility of the ascent in general, and that of the soul's union with the One in particular, is based on a principle to which I referred as the Principle of Affinity, namely: assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior affinity between the two terms. All the stages of the ascent imply that something of, or within, the individual soul is akin to the reality to which the soul is going to be assimilated, be it purified soul, Intellect, or the One. Or, as I argued in the last section of Chapter 1, the hypostases are present within oneself as the very possibility of the ascent in all its stages. As regards union, the last stage of the ascent, this affinity is found in relation to what was called the center of the soul, that which within oneself is most like the One. By ascending to the Good, the soul gradually eliminates what is foreign to its nature and becomes identical with its center.

Now, what is the nature of this event, the union of the center of the soul with the One? That is to say, what happens to the center of the soul (and to its love) once it reaches the last stage of the ascent and comes in contact with the

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[50] One may find support for this point also in Plato's dictum that "none of the gods philosophizes" (*Symposium* 204a1: θεῶν οὐδεὶς φιλοσοφεῖ), whereby he seems to envision the practice of philosophy as the prerogative of a rational being who has not quite succeeded (yet) in becoming a god, or godlike.

One? I will confine the treatment of these questions to some observations on two closely related issues: first, whether in union the center of the soul ceases to exist in its particularity and is absorbed into the One (Subsection 3.1); second, whether in union the love of the center of the soul, understood (like the love of all derived reality) as love directed to something other than that in which it inheres, comes to an end (Subsection 3.2). I shall argue that Plotinus' answer is negative on both counts, although it must be immediately noted that a good deal of exegetical work is required to make sense of the problem and, as far as I can tell, some ambivalence still remains.[51]

3.1 *The Permanence of the Individual Soul in Union*

It is evident from several passages that for Plotinus noetic reintegration is not the final stage of the ascent (e.g., I.4 [46] 4.19–20, VI.5 [23] 7.1–2, V.5 [32] 4.1–6). It is also sufficiently clear that that the individual soul is not annihilated by being reintegrated in Intellect, for in rejoining its higher part it also rejoins its true nature as one of the members of the intelligible realm; and although the members of this realm are united in a bond of friendship, or a tight-knit unity in which those members are reciprocally implicating, the intelligible realm remains nonetheless a multiplicity; thus, it follows that some differentiation (and differentiating factor) among them ought to be maintained.

Thus, the question is: Does something of the soul, insofar as it is an individual soul completely reintegrated in its higher part, thus abiding in the intelligible as one of its members, continue to exist in its individuality even in union? If it does, what is subtracted and what endures in the transition from noetic reintegration to union?

Plotinus scholars occasionally reference R. C. Zaehner's fourfold classification of mystical experience,[52] namely: first, *pantheistic* or natural (also called panenhenic), in which the goal of the individual human soul is to become one with nature; second, *ascetic*, in which the soul aims at dissociating itself as far as possible from the world through the so-called mortification of the flesh; third, *monistic*, in which the soul (or, we should say, more precisely, its center) becomes absorbed in the source of all reality; fourth, *theistic*, in which the soul (or, once again, its center) achieves union with God without thereby becoming identical with it or being annihilated in it. That the first two forms of mystical experience do not correspond to Plotinus' views (or at least cannot be considered final in a properly Plotinian ascent) should not be hard to establish. Against pantheistic or natural mysticism, simply consider that the One, which for Plotinus is the truly final end of the ascent, in its absolute transcendence is neither nature nor all things (see Chapter 1 note 10). In fact, pantheistic union would fall short even of noetic reintegration, given that Intellect, too, is not nature. As a consequence, to become one with nature is indeed a type of unification, but even if it were possible, certainly it would not be the same as union with the One.[53] Against ascetic mysticism, it will suffice to observe that to detach oneself from the world, or to cease giving priority to the desires associated with one's sensible nature, is only one of the necessary stages of the ascent (i.e., purification), not its end.

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[51] Among the authors who have showed keen awareness of this ambivalence, see Remes (2007, 239–253), Chiaradonna (2009, 172–175), Corrigan and Turner (2017, 332–334).

[52] E.g., Dodds (1965, 79–80), Rist (1967, 214–218), Wallis (1995, 89 n. 1), Mamo (1976, 199–207), Meijer (1992, 295–296); the reference is to Zaehner (1957).

The problem, therefore, seems to subsist only in relation to the latter two kinds of mysticism, monistic and theistic. Without necessarily endorsing the terms "monistic" and "theistic," which here I use as no more than convenient labels to indicate annihilation (monistic reading) and permanence (theistic reading) of the individual soul (or rather of its innermost part or aspect: its center[54]) in the experience of union,[55] several interpreters nonetheless agree that union does not entail the obliteration of the soul's individual existence, although it is not always entirely clear what this existence amounts to in union.[56] By contrast, those who endorse a monistic view usually qualify their position through explanations of what is annihilated in union. At least in principle, the identity of what is annihilated can range from the entire soul (in which case we could speak of a radical monistic interpretation) to some of the soul's operations, faculties, parts or aspects (in which case we could speak of more relaxed monistic interpretations).[57] To my knowledge, none of the authors who endorse a theistic view of union denies that something is subtracted or eliminated in union, although they may disagree as to the precise nature of what is subtracted. What they do agree on is that something of the individual soul subsists even in union, although here too there may be disagreement as to the precise nature of what subsists. So, unless by "annihilation" we understand the obliteration of the whole soul (the radical monistic interpretation), and unless by "permanence" we mean the permanence of aspects of the soul that were already subtracted in previous stages of the ascent, including perhaps its entire embodied history (to which we might refer as a radical theistic interpretation), generally speaking it seems to me that the opposition between theistic and monistic readings of union, while still significant, is considerably milder than it may appear at first.

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[53] For more detailed refutations of a pantheistic reading of union in Plotinus, see Trouillard (1961, 436–438), Rist (1967, 214–217).

[54] This qualification is in place because if Porphyry's testimony that Plotinus succeeded in approaching and being united "in an unspeakable actuality" (ἐνεργείᾳ ἀρρήτῳ: VP 23.17) with "the God who is over all things" (τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεῷ: VP 23.16) some four times while Porphyry was with him (VP 23.15–18) means that Plotinus was able to achieve union with the One during his earthly existence, obviously the faculties of Plotinus' soul operating in the sensible realm, including memory and discursive thought, through which he was able to recall and report his experience of union, were not annihilated. On the possibility of achieving union provisionally in this life, see also Plotinus VI.9 [9] 9.59–60 (cf. P. Hadot 1994, 197–198).

[55] Bussanich (1988, 192; 1994, 5326–5328; 1997, 364–365) has reservations about the appropriateness of the conceptual distinction between monistic and theistic mysticism in connection with Plotinian union. I agree with Ousager (2004, 17 note 1) that by restricting the connotation of the terms "theistic" and "monistic" respectively to permanence and annihilation of the particular self (i.e., what I referred to as the center of the soul) in union, we avoid Bussanich's reservations. The same may apply to worries expressed by Meijer (1992, 295–296), as well as to the clarification of these terms by Rist (1989, 184–190), mainly in reply to criticism by Mamo (1976).

[56] See for instance Arnou (1967, 250–251), Dodds (1928, 141; 1960, 7), Burque (1940), Trouillard (1961, 436), Rist (1967, 213–230), O'Daly (1973, 85), ARMSTRONG (I, xxvii–xviii), Armstrong (1967, 163; 1977, 59), P. Hadot (1980, 245), Igal (1982–1998, I, 100–101), Seidl (1985, 258–264), Beierwaltes (1985, 143), Wallis (1995, 89), O'Meara (1993, 106), Gerson (1994, 292 notes 46–47, 293 note 50), Corrigan (2005, 34, 188). For further references see Ousager (2004, 70 note 99).

What I wish to argue here is that what of the soul subsists in union is a self—the center of the soul—whose only activity is love for the Good, or a self whose final "simplification" amounts to the reduction of its *eros* to love for the One. In other words, in union one becomes, not the Good, but pure love *for* the Good and the Good alone. Only in this sense, I maintain, does something of the soul subsist in this final stage of the ascent. Lover and beloved are united but not identical; that is, in the end the lover can love the beloved correspondingly, with the whole of itself, but it does not cease to exist as a lover. To support this reading of union textually, I think it will suffice to show the plausibility of two things: first, that some of the main passages of the *Enneads* cited in favor of a monistic reading of union can be read as more likely supporting a theistic reading; second, that Plotinus describes union in erotic terms.

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[57] For example, Mamo (1976) thinks that Plotinus is a monist, but denies that the particular intellect is entirely annihilated in union: "What remains is the admittedly strange notion of a mind whose formal and intelligible structure is still intact (and still known by all other form-minds) but whose normal awareness is lacking because it is now 'a mind senseless and in love' (νοῦς ἄφρων καὶ ἐρῶν [cf. VI.7 [38] 35.24])" (Mamo 1976, 206). Authors recently endorsing variations of what I have here conventionally called a monistic interpretation of union in Plotinus include: Bussanich (1988, 147–148, 180–193; 1994, 5325–5328); Meijer (1992, 294–325), but notice that Meijer (1992, 318) does not think that Plotinus' view is consistent; Ousager (2004, 94–104); for references to earlier supporters of the monistic interpretation see Seidl (1985, 256 notes 4–12). To be sure, a monistic reading of Plotinian union is not new; it might have been adumbrated by David Hume, for example, toward the end of the third of his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, where he writes that for Plotinus "our most perfect worship of him [viz., of the Deity] consists, not in acts of veneration, reverence, gratitude, or love; but in a certain mysterious self-annihilation, or total extinction of all our faculties" (Hume 1854, II, 449).

I already mentioned that the very possibility of union is based on the Principle of Affinity, according to which a lower term can be assimilated to a higher one on the basis of a prior affinity between them, and that the lower term at issue in union is the so-called center of the soul. If a theistic interpretation of union is correct, at least the center of the soul—what in this context we may also call our ideal self—will not be annihilated or completely absorbed in the One, but will have to subsist united with it, rather than identical with it.

On the other hand, if a monistic interpretation of union is correct, and if union entails a thorough reintegration of oneself in the center of the soul, then the center of the soul is not only something that is most *like* the One, but the One itself present in each soul. And since the One is the same for every individual soul, and the center of the soul—the One within—is one's true self or individuality, the One is not all individuals so much as the only individual. This version of the monistic interpretation is roughly what we find in Ousager, who states: "Only in so far as the human soul becomes the One is a human being really an individual in the literal sense. The One is therefore the real Self of any human being."[58] And as he refers to *Enneads* VI.5 [23] 1.14–25, he writes: "The One is literally the only individual, and everybody else is only an individual in so far as he actually unites with the One within."[59] More precisely, Ousager argues that unification of the particular self (what I have been calling the center of the soul) with the One comprises two stages: the first stage is a non-cognitive contact with the One in which the particularity of the self is preserved, while the second stage is where unification proper takes place in the form of a complete annihilation of the particular self, or the coincidence of the particular self and the One.[60] My attention here will be reserved to the claim concerning the second stage: that in union the particular self, or the center of the soul, is annihilated.

Ousager's argument hinges on the claim that to be a self (αὐτός), according to Plotinus, means to be unqualifiedly simple or indivisible: literally *individuum*.[61] But as we just saw, since the only unqualifiedly simple thing in Plotinus' universe is the One, the only individual will also be the One. Therefore, if ascending to the One means to be reintegrated in what is most truly oneself, union with the Principle will have to mean annihilation of all that was merely *called* individual at lower stages of the ascent, until the innermost particular self—the center of the soul, or the One within—is itself annihilated as it comes completely to coalesce with the One.

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[58] Ousager (2004, 10).

[59] Ousager (2004, 97).

[60] Ousager (2004, 94–95 for the first stage, and 95–104 for the second).

[61] This is the thesis of the first part of Ousager's work (Ousager 2004, 15–119).

I think that the chief difficulty of this interpretation lies precisely in what Ousager thinks Plotinus understands by "self." He cites[62] *Enneads* V.3 [49] 15.10–14 as a key passage in support of his view:[63]

> What then is more in need of the One? That which is not one; it is therefore many; but all the same it aspires to the One; so it is a one-many. For all that is not one is kept in being by the One, and is what it is through this: for if it had not become one, even though it is composed of many parts, it is not yet what one would call a self.

It seems to me that to infer that to be a self in the strict sense of the term means to be unqualifiedly simple is possible only if the phrase "if it had not become one" is read to mean "if it had not become *the One*." I think that to do so would be is incorrect. Instead, I maintain that for something to become one means to become self-identical to the extent that it is possible for it to be self-identical, or to be "one by participation in the One" (μετουσίᾳ ἑνὸς ἕν: V.3 [49] 15.16), from which all "the others derive their oneness" (παρ' οὗ πως καὶ τὰ ἄλλα: V.3 [49] 15.17). The point, therefore, is not that someone's ultimate self *is* the One, but that it is one individual being with a specific unified structure *because of* the One.[64] To be clear, I am not denying that it is plausible to refer to the One as a self or an individual (in fact, as the *only* individual in a literal sense) and on this basis to maintain that, compared to the One, all other selves are not undivided but are imperfect images of this absolute self.[65] However, from this it does not follow that for the center of a given soul to be a self means to be unqualifiedly simple and, consequently, that in union with the One it must be annihilated, nor do the *Enneads* seem to warrant such a view beyond reasonable doubt.

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[62] Ousager (2004, 98).

[63] V.3 [49] 15.10–14: Τί οὖν ἐνδεέστερον τοῦ ἑνός; Ἢ τὸ μὴ ἕν· πολλὰ ἄρα· ἐφιέμενον [11] δὲ ὅμως τοῦ ἑνός· ἓν ἄρα πολλά. Πᾶν γὰρ τὸ μὴ [12] ἓν τῷ ἓν σῴζεται καὶ ἔστιν, ὅπερ ἐστί, τούτῳ· μὴ γὰρ ἓν [13] γενόμενον, κἂν ἐκ πολλῶν ᾖ, οὔπω ἐστὶν ὅ τι εἴποι τις [14] αὐτό. The translation is by ARMSTRONG, with the exception of the question on line 10 (ARMSTRONG: "When [most likely a typographical error] then is more deficient than the One?) and of τούτῳ on line 12 (ARMSTRONG: "by this 'one'), on which I follow Beierwaltes (1991, 234–235); cf. also Ham (2000, 87 note 182). On the plausibility of translating the Greek pronoun αὐτός with the noun "self," see O'Daly (1973, 89–90); cf. Ousager (2004, 99 note 153). See also III.8 [30] 10.20–23, VI.6 [34] 1.10–20.

[64] In his commentary to the passage of the *Enneads* I just cited, Beierwaltes (1991, 236) writes: "Das Eine selbst vermittelt [...] in sich verschiedene Einheitsstrukturen an das ihm Entsprungene – etwa als sich selbst denkende Bezüglichkeit des Geistes, als zahlhafte Strukturiertheit der Ideen im Nus, als eine die sympathetische Einheit des Kosmos „bindende" Reflexivität der Seele [...]. Das jeweilige Ein-Sein *ist* Grund und Bedingung der jeweiligen Identität, die im Vergleich mit anderem Identischen um so intensiver *ist*, je mehr sie in *sich selbst Eins* ist und je näher ihre eigene Einheit des Einen selbst steht."

[65] Bréhier (1961, 178–179) refers to the One as "le sujet pur, absolue, solitaire, sans aucun rapport à des objets extérieurs"; O'Daly (1973, 91) calls it "an absolute Subject or Self." See O'Daly (1973, 90–94) for references to the *Enneads* on this point.

Take for example VI.5 [23] 1.14–25, another one of the texts Ousager refers to in support of the view that the One is the only individual and is present in the human soul, and that a human being is an individual only insofar the human soul literally becomes the One:[66]

> For this one, proceeding to the others as far as, and in the way in which, it can proceed, would appear as many and even, in a sense, be many; but the ancient nature and the desire of the good, that is of itself, leads to what is really one, and every nature presses on to this, to itself. For this is the good to this one nature, belonging to itself and being itself: but this is being one. It is in this sense that the good is rightly said to be our own; therefore one must not seek it outside. For where could it be if it had fallen outside being? Or how could one discover it in non-being? But it is obvious that it is in being, since it is not non-being. But if that good is being and in being, it would clearly be for each individual in himself.

Ousager's interpretation is correct, I think, only if one takes the phrases "the desire of the good, that is of itself" (lines 16–17) and "being itself: but this is being one" (lines 19–20) to mean respectively "the desire of *the Good, which is the same as* itself" and "being itself: but this is being *the One*." However, I doubt that this is what Plotinus means. It rather seems to me that the phrases "the desire of the good" and "this is being one" simply refer to the desire of every individual nature to achieve the highest degree of unity (which here seems to be coextensive with goodness) that it can achieve, given that some natures "fall short of what they essentially are,"[67] and all natures except the One fall short of unqualified unity (and goodness). If this interpretation is plausible, it should suffice for establishing that for an individual soul to become oneself does not mean to become the One, but rather to achieve the greatest degree of unity and goodness that can be achieved by an individual soul. This, I maintain, means to be able to identify with the center of one's soul in union with the One. Therefore, it is doubtful whether in Plotinus there is in fact a doctrine of the self strictly conceived of as that which is indivisible or unqualifiedly simple.[68]

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[66] VI.5 [23] 1.14–25: Τὸ γὰρ ἓν τοῦτο προϊὸν [15] μὲν ἐπὶ θάτερα, ἐφ᾽ ὅσον προελθεῖν αὐτῷ οἷόν τε, πολλὰ ἂν [16] φανείη τε καί πως καὶ εἴη, ἡ δ᾽ ἀρχαία φύσις καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις [17] τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ, εἰς ἓν ὄντως ἄγει, καὶ ἐπὶ [18] τοῦτο σπεύδει πᾶσα φύσις, ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτήν. Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ [19] ἀγαθὸν τῇ μιᾷ ταύτῃ φύσει τὸ εἶναι αὐτῆς καὶ εἶναι αὐτήν· [20] τοῦτο δ᾽ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶναι μίαν. Οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὀρθῶς [21] εἶναι λέγεται οἰκεῖον· διὸ οὐδὲ ἔξω ζητεῖν αὐτὸ δεῖ. Ποῦ [22] γὰρ ἂν εἴη ἔξω τοῦ ὄντος περιπεπτωκός; Ἢ πῶς ἄν τις ἐν [23] τῷ μὴ ὄντι ἐξεύροι αὐτό; Ἀλλὰ δηλονότι ἐν τῷ ὄντι οὐκ [24] ὂν αὐτὸ μὴ ὄν. Εἰ δὲ ὂν καὶ ἐν τῷ ὄντι ἐκεῖνο, ἐν ἑαυτῷ [25] ἂν εἴη ἑκάστῳ. Cf. Ousager (2004, 97).

[67] Emilsson and Strange (2015, 215), commenting on this passage.

As for the problem of annihilation, authors who favor a monistic reading of union provide numerous references to the *Enneads* in support of the claim that in union the center of the soul loses its particularity by merging into the One. To deal with the details of all these references would exceed the purposes of this section. Therefore, I shall only take into account some of the most significant ones, in the hope that to show how I think a monistic interpretation fails to do justice to these should suffice safely to indicate its inadequacy to explain the others as well.

One of these references is a text we have already encountered, VI.7 [38] 22.17–19, where Plotinus writes: "As long as there is something higher than that which is present to it [viz. to the soul], it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by the giver of its love" (see Chapter 2 note 69 for the Greek text). Ousager takes this text to imply that at this stage of the ascent "the soul can be lifted further only by the One and no longer by itself."[69] One need not disagree with this claim in order to realize that neither to be lifted nor to be lifted *further* entails complete annihilation. Moreover, it is not clear why, if what Ousager claims is correct, the statement that it is the One that lifts the soul should not apply to every stage of the ascent prior to union, since even at each of those stages there is something higher than what is present to the soul at that particular stage. But if this is so and to be lifted by the One entails annihilation, the individual soul should be annihilated well before reaching union with the One.

Ousager goes on to cite II.9 [33] 9.45–54 (where at line 50 Plotinus qualifies assimilation to the divine with the restriction, "as far as the human soul can": ὅσον ἐστὶ δυνατὸν ψυχῇ ἀνθρώπου) as the only passage openly contradicting a monistic interpretation of union.[70] However, he rightly observes that this passage was written against the Gnostics, who apparently thought that assimilation to the divine was immediately available to the soul desiring it. By contrast, at this stage of the ascent it is the One that "takes over and becomes our self,"[71] as Plotinus seems to suggests at V.1 [10] 11.9–10, where he writes that the One is "in each and every one of those capable of receiving it as another self" (καθ᾽ ἕκαστον τῶν δυναμένων δέχεσθαι οἷον ἄλλον αὐτόν;[72] see also VI.7 [38] 27.16–19). But again, it is not clear beyond reasonable doubt that Plotinus is speaking of annihilation of the self in this text. On the contrary, in the lines that immediately follow this passage, Plotinus compares the relation between the One and the individual self taking place in union to that between the center of a circle and its radii. Thus, at V.1 [10] 11.10–15 he writes that the One abides in itself undividedly while those capable of it receive it as another self,[73]

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[68] Moreover, as Tornau (2009, 340, note 2) rightly observes, some of the passages from the *Enneads* through which Ousager wishes to support his view of the One as the only self are in fact about Intellect (e.g., V.8 [31] 11 and IV.7 [2] 10.42–45, treated is some detail in Ousager 2004, respectively at pages 68–70 and 78).

[69] Ousager (2004, 95).

[70] Ousager (2004, 96). By contrast, Meijer (1992, 311–313), directing his remarks against Arnou (1967, 248–250), claims that the phrase "as far as possible" (καθ' ὅσον δύναται) never applies to the soul's union with the One, and that ὡς at VI.9 [9] 4.29 and 9.56 is not used as a restriction of the identification of the soul and the One in union, but as an indication of the soul's "special mode of seeing: union" (Meijer, 1992, 312). Meijer is right to highlight the exceptional character of the experience of union also from a lexical standpoint. However, I think it is unnecessary to take this special mode of seeing as entailing the annihilation of the seer in the experience of vision. Instead, as I shall argue presently, this is a vision that occurs in pure light, without any visible object (other than light iself) in sight.

> just as the centre of the circle exists by itself, but every one of the radii in the circle has its point in the centre and the lines bring their individuality to it. For it is with something of this sort in ourselves that we are in contact with god and are with him and depend upon him; and those of us who converge towards him are firmly established in him.

It seems to me that there is no clear indication of annihilation in this text. If anything, expressions such as contact, dependence, convergence, and establishment (not to mention the expression "as another self," οἷον ἄλλον αὐτόν, which immediately precedes this passage at V.1 [10] 11.10) may indicate that "we" (which I here take to mean the centers of our souls) are still minimally distinguished from the One, though in direct contact with it by being wholly and unswervingly committed to it.

Further, Ousager[74] references IV.3 [27] 5.4–5, where Plotinus writes of Socrates that "he will cease to be, precisely when he attains to the very best" (ἀπολεῖται δέ, ὅταν μάλιστα γένηται ἐν τῷ ἀρίστῳ). Leaving aside the fact that here Plotinus is not speaking of union, but of Socrates' soul as attaining what I called noetic reintegration, Ousager omits the very next few words of this passage, which seem to contradict the annihilation thesis: "Now no real being ever ceases to be" (Ἦ ἀπολεῖται οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων: IV.3 [27] 5.5–6). The reference here appears to be to the soul of Socrates as a denizen of the noetic realm (i.e., most likely the Form of the individual which in its embodied state was called Socrates).

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[71] Ousager (2004, 97).

[72] This is perhaps an echo of Aristotle's definition of the friend as another self in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.5.1166a31–32: ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός (cf. O'Daly 1973, 90).

[73] V.1 [10] 11.10–15: ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ [11] κέντρον ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ ἐστιν, ἔχει δὲ καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν ἐν τῷ [12] κύκλῳ σημεῖον ἐν αὑτῷ, καὶ αἱ γραμμαὶ τὸ ἴδιον προσφέρουσι [13] πρὸς τοῦτο. Τῷ γὰρ τοιούτῳ τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἡμεῖς [14] ἐφαπτόμεθα καὶ σύνεσμεν καὶ ἀνηρτήμεθα· ἐνιδρύμεθα δὲ [15] οἳ ἂν συννεύωμεν ἐκεῖ.

[74] Cf. Ousager (2004, 101).

Another passage that according to some authors supports a monistic interpretation is VI.9 [9] 9.55–58,[75] where Plotinus describes the experience of union through the image of light (my emphasis):[76]

> There one can see both him [viz. the One] and oneself as it is right to see: the self glorified, full of intelligible light—but rather *itself pure light*—weightless, floating free, having become—but rather, being—a god…

Here the soul in its center sees not only the One, but also itself as light; and when all there is to see is light, with no other object in view, one will concede that it is hard to distinguish any duality in the experience. In spite of this, I think it is still possible to reject a monistic reading of this passage if one will allow a simple thought experiment. When the soul has left behind everything that hinders the union, one could say that it has become spotlessly transparent. In this transparency, all that the soul sees when it looks at itself is that light that shines on (or rather, through) it (cf. V.3 [49] 17.28–38, V.5 [32] 7):[77] the soul has become so well disposed to the One that nothing in it hinders the radiance of the Source, and in looking at itself, it sees the same radiance. If this interpretation is at least plausible, there is nothing forcing us to read this passage as an expression of a monistic view of union.

Perhaps the text that most explicitly appears to support a monistic interpretation of union is VI.9 [9] 10.14–21, 11.4–7:[78]

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[75] E.g., Meijer (1992, 315–316). For Ousager (2004, 95), instead, "the duality between seer and seen is preserved at this stage."

[76] VI.9 [9] 9.55–58: Ὁρᾶν δὴ ἔστιν [56] ἐνταῦθα κἀκεῖνον καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὁρᾶν θέμις· ἑαυτὸν μὲν [57] ἠγλαϊσμένον, φωτὸς πλήρη νοητοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ φῶς αὐτὸ [58] καθαρόν, ἀβαρῆ, κοῦφον, θεὸν γενόμενον, μᾶλλον δὲ ὄντα…

[77] One might recall the painful and sometimes comical experience of hitting one's nose against a spotless glass door—invisible precisely because spotless, yet very much other than light.

[78] VI.9 [9] 10.14–21: Τότε μὲν οὖν οὔτε ὁρᾷ οὐδὲ διακρίνει ὁ ὁρῶν [15] οὐδὲ φαντάζεται δύο, ἀλλ' οἷον ἄλλος γενόμενος καὶ οὐκ [16] αὐτὸς οὐδ' αὑτοῦ συντελεῖ ἐκεῖ, κἀκείνου γενόμενος ἕν [17] ἐστιν ὥσπερ κέντρῳ κέντρον συνάψας. Καὶ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα [18] συνελθόντα ἕν ἐστι, τό τε δύο ὅταν χωρίς. Οὕτω [19] καὶ ἡμεῖς νῦν λέγομεν ἕτερον. Διὸ καὶ δύσφραστον τὸ [20] θέαμα· πῶς γὰρ ἂν ἀπαγγείλειέ τις ὡς ἕτερον οὐκ ἰδὼν [21] ἐκεῖ ὅτε ἐθεᾶτο ἕτερον, ἀλλὰ ἓν πρὸς ἑαυτόν; […] VI.9 [9] 11.4–7: Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν δύο οὐκ [5] ἦν, ἀλλ' ἓν ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ ἰδὼν πρὸς τὸ ἑωραμένον, ὡς ἂν [6] μὴ ἑωραμένον, ἀλλ' ἡνωμένον, ὃς ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐκείνῳ [7] ἐμίγνυτο εἰ μεμνῷτο, ἔχοι ἂν παρ' ἑαυτῷ ἐκείνου εἰκόνα. Ousager refers to this passage (or parts of it, including the earlier lines 11–13) repeatedly (e.g., Ousager 2004, 66, 70, 84, 102, 107); cf. also Bussanich (1988, 183–184), Meijer (1992, 270–278, 310).

> So then the seer does not see and does not distinguish and does not imagine two, but it is as if he had become someone else and not himself and does not count as his own there, but has come to belong to that and so is one, having joined, as it were, centre to centre. For here too when the centres have come together they are one, but there is duality when they are separate. This also is how we now speak of 'another'. For this reason the vision is hard to put into words. For how could one announce that as another when he did not see, there when he had the vision, another, but one with himself? […]
>
> Since, then, there were not two,[79] but the seer himself was one with the seen (for it was not really seen, but united to him), if he remembers who he became when he was united with that, he will have an image of that in himself.

In this case, too, it seems to me that the obliteration of the self is neither stated clearly nor again suggested. On the contrary, in this passage Plotinus takes pains to stress the difficulty of putting this experience into words (VI.9 [9] 10.19–21). He is not suggesting that the particular self is identical with the One and completely annihilated in it, which would be quite easy to say, but rather that while in unitive vision what is *seen* is one thing only (cf. also VI.7 [38] 34.12–14), there is no reason to claim that the self and the One *are* the same thing; instead, they remain distinct, hence the difficulty of expressing the nature of that vision. Moreover, the use of πρός at VI.9 [9] 10.21 and 11.5 seems to indicate that a minimal distance between the two terms in the union is maintained.[80] Finally, the analogy of the soul's spotless transparency I introduced in reference to the previous passage (VI.9 [9] 9.55–58) could apply also in this context.

To sum up, on the basis of the few passages from the *Enneads* which I have briefly discussed, I am not persuaded that there is sufficient textual evidence to support a monistic interpretation of the experience of union in Plotinus. Quite the contrary, although some ambiguity remains, it seems to me that even in union the center of the soul retains its individual existence.[81] But does it also retain its love?

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[79] Cf. VI.7 [38] 34.13–14 and VI.9 [9] 10.15; also V.5 [32] 8.21–22.

[80] Seidl (1985, 264), cited approvingly by Gerson (1994, 292 note 47), already noticed that verbs of union with prefixes such as συν- and μετα- indicate that duality is maintained even in union: for example at VI.9 [9] 9.45 (συνεῖναι μεταλαβόντα), 9.48 (μετασχοῦσα), 11.32 (συγγίνεται).

[81] A correct grasp of the concept of union in Plotinus is important also for recent philosophical debates in which Plotinian notions are brought to bear on the thought of contemporary philosophers. For instance, S. B. Allen repeatedly hints at the idea that, although

We have thus reached the second question introduced at the beginning of this section, whether in union the love of the soul, mirroring the power of both generation and reversion at the end of the process of derivation, should come to an end.

3.2 *The Permanence of the Love of the Individual Soul in Union*

If, as I just argued, there is no conclusive evidence in the *Enneads* to contend that the center of the soul is effaced in union and, instead, it is plausible to maintain that it endures even at the climax of the return journey to its source, what specific feature characterizes the existence of the individual soul in that experience? Put differently, what is subtracted from it as it transits beyond Intellect, and what is left of it in this final stage of the ascent? Let me first give the short version of my answer to these questions: what is subtracted in union is intellection (νόησις), the proper activity of the noetically reintegrated soul; what is left, or the final and exclusive feature retained by the center of the soul in union, is *eros*, love for the One. The center of the soul, that which in the individual soul is most akin to the One, is this very love for the One, a love by which the soul, in union, is capable of loving the One *correspondingly*. In trying to offer a slightly fuller account of this brief answer, I will at the same time provide a reply to the second question introduced earlier in my discussion of union, of which the questions asked in this paragraph are specifications: Does love come to an end in union?

I argued that in noetic reintegration the individual soul comes fully to identify itself with its higher part, thus abiding in the intelligible realm. As a member of Intellect, the fundamental activity of the noetically reintegrated soul is the actual cognition of all the Forms. This, however, is not its only activity; in fact, although intellection or non-discursive thought (νόησις) is the one activity

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one can find several analogies between the thought of Plotinus and that of Levinas (on which see Narbonne 2006a; Peperzak 1998), what sharply separates the two thinkers is the individual's relation to transcendence, or to the beyond of being (S. B. Allen 2009, 23–24, 32–33, 49–50)—the Platonic expressions from *Republic* VI.509b9 by which Plotinus and Levinas occasionally signify the One and the Other (*Autrui*) respectively. According to Allen, Plotinus describes this relation in terms of a mystical union or fusion of the soul with the One, which is precisely what Levinas wants to avoid through the concept of separation which is at work in the ethical relation (see particularly Levinas 1969, 102–105, where Plotinus is explicitly mentioned in this regard; cf. also Levinas 1983, 21–23). This reading is questionable, however, if union in Plotinus does not mean total fusion or obliteration of individuality, but constant presence in love. The chief difference between Plotinus and Levinas on this specific point, I maintain, does not reside primarily in their respective understandings of the individual's relation to transcendence, but in the fact that in Plotinus one does not seem to find the conceptual tools to speak of the Levinasian Other in terms of transcendence.

by which Intellect constitutes itself in its essence, such an activity depends on another factor, without which Intellect itself would never emerge as a fully formed hypostasis. This factor is what in Chapter 2 I called "noetic *eros*," that is, the love whereby Intellect constitutes itself, qua hypostasis, as a replica of the higher unity of the Principle while remaining erotically directed toward the One. As we saw and as Plotinus himself points out at VI.7 [38] 35.19–26, we find a double direction in the activity of Intellect: on the one hand, the power of thought (line 20: δύναμιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν), whereby Intellect is directed inwards, toward its own contents; on the other, a certain intuition or reception (lines 21–22: ἐπιβολῇ τινι καὶ παραδοχῇ), whereby it remains erotically (line 24: νοῦς ἐρῶν) directed outwards (or rather, upwards), toward the One (cf. also III.8 [30] 11.22–25, VI.5 [23] 4.16–20).

Now, if the noetically reintegrated individual soul is to achieve an even higher degree of proximity to the One and be lifted into the final stage of the ascent, according to Plotinus it ought to strip itself of the last vestige of otherness and multiplicity, that feature which prevents it from being completely attuned to the universal desideratum, namely, intellection. The soul can do this only by fully identifying with what in itself is most akin to the One, its center or highest point, for only by that of itself which is most like the One is the soul finally able to come in contact with the One—like by like: the Principle of Affinity.

The reason for the necessity of transcending intellection is that intellection is indeed a mode of relating to the Principle, but one which fails to relate to it correspondingly, or as the *relatum* itself requires. As we saw in the second section of Chapter 2, the activity of Intellect is a self-enclosed activity by which the second hypostasis emerges as the identity of the totality of the intelligibles and that which thinks them. As such, noetic activity is a replica of the higher unity of the One, but it is not itself an intellective grasping *of* the One as such, for it does not have the One as the direct object of its thinking. For the One, being unqualifiedly simple, escapes the intrinsically dividing activity of thought, even when this is the perfect thought of Intellect; and being an infinite power, it escapes the limiting activity of thought, even noetic thought. For this reason, the activity by which Intellect constitutes itself is not thought in general, but *self*-thought, an inner, reflective gaze which as such is not an immediate grasp of the transcendent One. By knowing itself as the identity of knower and object known, Intellect grasps the One only indirectly, or as dividedly mirrored in a perfectly unified plurality, rather than in the unqualified simplicity that is proper to the Principle. Plotinus treats often and extensively the idea that the One, both as Principle and as End, abides beyond intellection, is superior to Intellect, and cannot be grasped through noetic activity (cf. III.8 [30] 8–11, V.1 [10] 7, V.3 [49] 11–12, V.4 [7] 2, V.5 [32] 3 and 5, the whole of V.6 [24], V.9 [5] 2, VI.7 [38] 37–42, VI.8 [39] 19, VI.9 [9] 2–4). For this reason, if the noetically reintegrated soul is to ascend to the One and achieve union with it, it must transcend intellection and meet the Principle on the Principle's own terms, in its pure and unmediated simplicity. Intellection is thus the last element that needs to be stripped away in the soul's return to its source.

Here a dichotomy—a false one, as I shall argue shortly—suggests itself. On the one hand, it would appear natural to refer to the outcome of the final divestment of the soul as its utter simplification, whether conceived as the complete merging of its center with the One resulting in the annihilation of the former (which I rejected in the previous subsection) or as a total retreat into its center. Either way, thus understood simplification would be incompatible with the outward movement that seems to be essential to love. On the other hand, if my claim that the contact between the center of the soul and the One is to be understood as the transformation of the soul into pure love for the One is correct, it would rather seem that union should be described as a complete self-abandonment of the soul to this ultimate object of love, hence a radical outward movement. The question, therefore, is whether in his conception of union Plotinus himself favors self-simplification over what I have described as abandonment to the One and, more fundamentally, whether these two concepts and the (metaphorical, that is, non-spatial) movements associated with them—inwards and outwards respectively—are substantially incompatible, and thus Plotinus *has* to favor one of them.

Given the common designation of the last stage of the ascent as union, one would be tempted to conclude that Plotinus favors simplification over abandonment. This does not seem to be the case, however; or, if preference is somehow given to simplification, it is not to the exclusion of self-abandonment. Instead, the designation of the last stage of the ascent as union appears to be a convention resulting from typical usage in Plotinus scholarship (see for instance the references given in note 1 above). Of the thirty-one times that Plotinus uses words designating union—ἕνωσις, ἑνότης, and ἑνοῦν—only once does he seem to employ one of them, the verb ἑνοῦν, to name the actual experience taking place in the last stage of the ascent (i.e., at VI.9 [9] 11.6: ἡνωμένον).[82] This does not mean that the language of union must be avoided in our descriptions of the last stage of the ascent, but more simply that in employing it we should be aware of the wide range of its referents and, in particular, we should not immediately associate it with the coincidence of the two terms involved in the experience of union.

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[82] Cf. the relevant entries in Sleeman and Pollet (1980). The term αὐτοένωσις (ARMSTRONG: "absolute unification"), used at VI.1 [42] 26.27 (in HS2 but not in HS1, which follows the reading αὐτὸ ἕν), seems to designate the greatest unity and unifying power pertaining to the One (cf. Isnardi Parente 1994, 307–308), but without any clear reference to the annihilation of the soul defended by Ousager (2004, 102).

In other places Plotinus uses other terms that remain open to conflicting interpretations, for they seem to imply both simplification and openness in the experience that takes place in the final stage of the ascent. The specific terms I have in mind are the verb ἁπλόω and its substantive cognate ἅπλωσις, and the chief passages of the *Enneads* where they occur are VI.7 [38] 35.23–27 and VI.9 [9] 11.22–25. The first occurrence of this terminology is a passage I considered in my discussion of Plotinus' distinction between Loving Intellect and Thinking Intellect in Chapter 2; the passage, VI.7 [38] 35.23–26, reads: "And that first one is the contemplation of Intellect in its right mind, and the other is Intellect in love, when it goes out of its mind 'drunk with nectar'; then it falls in love, *simplified* [ἁπλωθεὶς] into happiness by having its fill…" (my emphasis; see Chapter 2 note 64 for the full Greek text).[83] The second passage, VI.9 [9] 11.22–25, is a description of the soul's union with the One: "But that other, perhaps, was not a contemplation, but another kind of seeing, a being out of oneself and *simplifying* and giving oneself over and pressing toward contact and rest and a sustained thought leading to adaptation…"[84] (again, the emphasis is mine).

In the first passage, the term that Armstrong translates as "simplified" (and which in Chapter 2 I translated with "blooming") at VI.7 [38] 35.26 is ἁπλωθεὶς. In doing this, he is in the company of several translators.[85] The basic meanings of ἁπλόω as given by Liddell and Scott are "make single," "unfold," "spread out";[86] but in Sleeman and Pollet's *Lexicon Plotinianum* we are given to understand that Plotinus uses this verb only in the meaning of "unfolding" or "expanding."[87] The term occurs only two other times in the *Enneads*: at III.5 [50] 9.2 in the sense of "spread out" (referred to Poros, who stands for *logos*), and at VI.7 [38] 1.56 clearly in the sense of "unfolding." For this reason, some translators render ἁπλωθεὶς with expressions that seem to oppose the concept of simplification.[88] The question, then, is whether the two renderings—simplification and unfolding—are incompatible and we must choose one, that is, whether what is said to be unfolded or spread out cannot be at the same time more simplified.

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[83] The translation is by ARMSTRONG and, for the purposes of the current discussion, differs slightly from the one given in Chapter 2.

[84] VI.9 [9] 11.22–25: Τὸ δὲ ἴσως ἦν οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος [23] τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἔκστασις καὶ ἅπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὑτοῦ καὶ [24] ἔφεσις πρὸς ἁφὴν καὶ στάσις καὶ περινόησις πρὸς [25] ἐφαρμογήν…

[85] See VI.7 [38] 35.26 in: HS$_1$ and HS$_2$: *simplex factus*; MacKenna (1917–1930) and MacKenna and Page (1969): "it is made simplex"; Bréhier (1924–1938): "se simplifiant"; Harder (1956–1971): "einfach geworden"; Mizuchi, Tanogashira and Tanaka (1986–1988): 単一化し, *tan'itsuka shi*. Cf. Rist (1964, 103), Bussanich (1988, 179).

[86] Liddell and Scott (1996, s.v. ἁπλόω).

[87] Sleeman and Pollet (1980, s.v. ἁπλοῦν).

I do not think that the two readings are incompatible. The contexts and the uses of ἁπλωθεὶς at III.5 [50] 9.2 and VI.7 [38] 1.56 suggest that "simplified" is probably not the more desirable translation of the same term as it occurs in the first passage at VI.7 [38] 35.26, although my references in notes 85 and 88 indicate that translators are divided on the issue. However, from the standpoint of Plotinus' philosophy, one will observe that Loving Intellect is indeed more intensely unified than Thinking Intellect. Moreover, the perspective of our first passage is one from below, so to speak. Thus, on the one hand, what is involved in the assimilation of the ascending soul to Loving Intellect is also a process of simplification. On the other hand, as Alekniené argues, the *hapax* ἅπλωσις on line 23 of our second passage, *Enneads* VI.9 [9] 11.22–25, means, not simplification or simplicity (for which another noun, ἁπλότης, is generally used, for instance at V.5 [32] 6.32), but rather a self-opening of the soul to the One as this is encountered in the union.[89] The observation highlights an important aspect of that contact between the soul and the One which constitutes the last stage of the ascent, namely, the idea that union is not a closing of the individual soul upon itself, as if it were oblivious of everything else, but a complete and confident abandonment to the source of all things. This is confirmed by the two nouns that respectively precede and follow ἅπλωσις at VI.9 [9] 11.23 in our second passage: ἔκστασις and ἐπίδοσις. Both words denote the very opposite of a retreat into oneself.[90]

Once the two sides of the issue are properly considered, I think it would be excessive to play "simplification" against "self-opening" (or abandonment), as if the two concepts were totally incompatible. It rather seems to me that they are complementary, for if on the one hand the experience of union implies one's self-opening and confident abandonment to the One, on the other, this self-opening and abandonment are at the same time a simplification of the soul, which in union becomes one single, non-complex reality, no longer scattered in the (often incompatible) directions of a multiplicity of desiderata.[91]

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[88] P. Hadot (1988, 174 note 309) voices his agreement with Ficino (1492: "seipsam diffundens") and Cilento (1947–1949: "tutto steso") as he translates ἁπλωθεὶς at VI.7 [38] 35.26 with "s'épanuissant" (cf. also K. S. Guthrie 1918: "blossoms"; Radice 2002: "si apre"; F. Fronterotta, in Brisson and Pradeau 2002–2010: "il s'épanuit"; Alekniené 2010a, 55 note 10: "déploiement" or "ouverture," with observations in Alekniené 2010b) and insists that this "épanoussement" occurs "dans l'ivresse et la jouissance" (see Faggin 2000: "si abbandona"; Igal 1982–1998: "desencogida"). Meijer (1992, 279, 280–281) translates ἅπλωσις with "simplification," but rightly points out that the word can mean also "unfolding of oneself" or "making oneself open for."

[89] Alekniené (2010b). See also Armstrong (1940, 45–47).

[90] ARMSTRONG'S translation of these words, I believe, is quite appropriate: "a being out of oneself" (ἔκστασις) and "giving oneself over" (ἐπίδοσις).

So we ask again: What is left after this final divestment of the soul has taken place, an event which is both a simplification and an opening to the Good? If the center of the soul does not become nothing, to what single reality is it *re*-duced in union? Not to the One, in which its individuality would disappear according to a monistic reading of union. Instead, as I repeatedly anticipated, what the soul becomes in the final stage of the ascent is precisely undivided openness and total abandonment to the Good, pure love, love directed, simply and unswervingly, to the One. Union is thus a kind of contact by which the soul in its center is firmly established in the greatest erotic proximity of its desideratum.

Plotinus uses images related to the senses to express the condition of the center of the soul in union. The most common image concerns the sense of sight and describes the experience as a kind of vision, most frequently in I.6 [1] 7–9, VI.9 [9] 9–11, and VI.7 [38] 35–36. For example, at I.6 [1] 7.8–10, Plotinus writes of the one who has come the last stage of the ascent: "until, passing in the ascent all that is alien to the God, one sees with one's self alone That alone, simple, single and pure…" (ἕως ἄν τις παρελθὼν ἐν τῇ ἀναβάσει πᾶν ὅσον ἀλλότριον [9] τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτῷ μόνῳ αὐτὸ μόνον ἴδῃ εἰλικρινές, ἁπλοῦν, [10] καθαρόν…). As we saw earlier in my discussion of the monistic view of union, the terminology of vision pervades VI.9 [9] 10. And at VI.7 [38] 35.12–16 we read of the one who has achieved union with the One:[92]

> and then, as he looks and does not take his eyes away, by the continuity of his contemplation he no longer sees a sight, but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him, and he forgets all other objects of contemplation.

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[91] Meijer (1992, 304 and 281 note 799) argues that ἅπλωσις, ἔκστασις, and ἐπίδοσις as used at VI.9 [9] 11.23 are not direct descriptions of union, but of the activity (or activities) of the soul prior to union (which Meijer interprets monistically). Whether Meijer is right about this or not, the point here is that what this activity (or activities) entails is a simplification of the soul understood, not as a self-enclosing or isolation, but precisely as an elimination of all that hinders its final abandonment to the Good in union, including noetic activity.

[92] VI.7 [38] 35.12–16: τοῦτον μόνον τοῦ λοιποῦ βλέποι, εἶτα βλέπων καὶ [13] μὴ ἀφαιρῶν τὸ ὄμμα μηκέτι ὅραμα βλέποι τῷ συνεχεῖ τῆς [14] θέας, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ συγκεράσαιτο τῷ θεάματι, ὥστε [15] ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη τὸ ὁρατὸν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγονέναι, τῶν δ' [16] ἄλλων πάντων ἐπιλάθοιτο θεαμάτων.

Plotinus is well aware that the vision he is describing is no ordinary vision, but a different kind of seeing (ὄψιν ἄλλην: I.6 [1] 8.25–26; VI.9 [9] 11.22–23: ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν; cf. also VI.7 [38] 35.18–19, VI.9 [9] 10.9–21), one in which the contemplator and the object of contemplation are not seen as two, but one, as we saw earlier in commenting on the image of the centers of the two circles (VI.9 [9] 10.18–21). In spite of the peculiar unitive character of this contemplative experience, the image used to describe it, sight, has a fundamental weakness, namely, the fact that in ordinary vision a gap remains between the one who sees and what is seen. For this reason, I believe, Plotinus supplements the visual image with a tactile one; for with the sense of touch all distance between the two terms involved in the experience is filled and contact is established.[93]

But I believe that there is a more important reason for the use of images pertaining to the sense of touch. This is the fact that touch, more than vision, is the privileged sense of the sexual encounter, which in turn is the broader metaphor of what the soul experiences in the final stage of the ascent, a contact which is at the same time an overcoming of the hindrances that at lower stages separated the lover from its beloved. In the sexual encounter touch bridges that distance between the lovers which sight is unable to bridge.[94] The sense of touch, therefore, seems to be particularly appropriate to illustrate the loving contact between the soul and the One in the experience that takes place in the last stage of the ascent.[95] And if this is accurate, the fact that Plotinus describes union in erotic terms[96] may also allow us to overcome the false dichotomy between the sense of touch and the other senses in speaking of the last stage of the ascent, since to say that touch is the privileged sense of the erotic encounter does not mean that the other senses—vision,[97] for example, but perhaps also hearing (cf. V.1 [10] 12.15–21, III.8 [30] 9.26–28)—play no role in that encounter. Thus, if one grants that erotic imagery is not an accidental way of speaking about union in Plotinus,[98] descriptions of this ultimate experience in terms of sight and in terms of touch are rather complementary than antithetical.

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[93] I arrange references to the *Enneads* alphabetically around the terminology of touch employed by Plotinus: ἁφή (VI.9 [9] 11.24), ἐπαφή (VI.7 [38] 36.4), ἐφάπτεσθαι (V.1 [10] 11.14, V.3 [49] 17.25–26, V.6 [24] 6.35, VI.5 [23] 10.27–28, 41, VI.9 [9] 4.27, 9.55), θιγγάνειν (VI.9 [9] 4.27, 7.4). Along with images involving touch, Plotinus speaks of union also through the images of combining (συγκρίναι: VI.7 [38] 34.15), mixing (συγκεράννυσθαι: I.6 [1] 7.13), or joining together (συνάπτειν: VI.9 [9] 8.9; προσάπτειν: VI.7 [38] 40.2). Notice that the terminology of touch is used in reference to the One also in contexts other than the last stage of the soul's ascent: for example, ἐπαφή at V.3 [49] 10.42 (as well as θίξις on the same line and θιγγάνειν at 10.44) refers to Loving Intellect touching the One, while at VI.7 [38] 39.19 it describes the kind of grasp that the One has of itself, and at I.2 [19] 6.13 it denotes wisdom as the Intellect's possession of the intelligibles by direct contact; ἐφάπτεσθαι at VI.8 [39] 18.4 and 8 refers to Intellect touching the One. For comments on some of these terms, see Rist (1967, 222), Meijer (1992, 304–306).

[94] Cf. Meijer (1992, 304–305).

[95] For an interpretation of the importance of sexual imagery in Plotinus' metaphysics and the sense in which it may be considered metaphorical, see again Mazur (2009).

[96] Authors who variously share this opinion include: Rist (1964, 103; 1967, 222, 228), Miller (1977, 186–187), Thesleff (1980, 109–113), P. Hadot (1988, 61–62; 1994, 47–48), Meijer (1992, 304–305), Gerson (1994, 291 note 37, 292 note 46), Chadwick (1999, 67), Corrigan (2005, 167), Chiaradonna (2009, 173), Mazur (2009); cf. also Ousager (2004, 94–95), who however

Three texts of the *Enneads*, one from each of the three major periods of Plotinus' literary output (i.e., before, during, and after Porphyry's stay in Rome) in chronological order, should suffice to support my claim that erotic language is central to Plotinus' way of describing the experience of union. The first text is from the last treatise of the *Enneads* in Porphyry's order, *On the Good or the One*, VI.9 [9] 9.38–55. In this passage Plotinus speaks to the one who has never experienced union, and describes it in terms of the more familiar experience of love.[99]

> And if anyone does not know this experience,[100] let him think of it in terms of our loves here below, and what it is like to attain what one is

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believes this to be the case only for the stage of union preceding the complete annihilation of the particular self.

[97] As we saw in Chapter 3, the close association of *eros* and vision is explicitly endorsed at III.5 [50] 2.39–46, 3.6–15. The association of love and vision is also present in both Plato (*Cratylus* 420a9–b4: cf. Chapter 3 note 85) and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* IX.5.1167a4).

[98] In contrast with this view, Bussanich (1988, 183 and 187), consistent with his own version of the monistic interpretation of union, thinks that Plotinus does not use the language of love to describe union because "desire requires relatively distinct subjects and objects" (Bussanich 1988, 187).

[99] VI.9 [9] 9.38–55: Καὶ οἷς [39] μὲν ἄγνωστον ἐστι τὸ πάθημα τοῦτο, ἐντεῦθεν ἐνθυμείσθω [40] ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνταῦθα ἐρώτων, οἷόν ἐστι τυχεῖν ὧν τις [41] μάλιστα ἐρᾷ, καὶ ὅτι ταῦτα μὲν τὰ ἐρώμενα θνητὰ καὶ [42] βλαβερὰ καὶ εἰδώλων ἔρωτες καὶ μεταπίπτει, ὅτι οὐκ ἦν [43] τὸ ὄντως ἐρώμενον οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἡμῶν οὐδ' ὃ [44] ζητοῦμεν. Ἐκεῖ δὲ τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἐρώμενον, ᾧ ἔστι καὶ [45] συνεῖναι μεταλαβόντα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὄντως ἔχοντα, οὐ [46] περιπτυσσόμενον σαρξὶν ἔξωθεν. Ὅστις δὲ εἶδεν, οἶδεν [47] ὃ λέγω, ὡς ἡ ψυχὴ ζωὴν ἄλλην ἴσχει τότε καὶ προσιοῦσα [48] καὶ ἤδη προσελθοῦσα καὶ μετασχοῦσα αὐτοῦ, ὥστε [49] γνῶναι διατεθεῖσαν, ὅτι πάρεστιν ὁ χορηγὸς ἀληθινῆς [50] ζωῆς, καὶ δεῖ οὐδενὸς ἔτι. Τοὐναντίον δὲ ἀποθέσθαι τὰ [51] ἄλλα δεῖ, καὶ ἐν μόνῳ στῆναι τούτῳ, καὶ τοῦτο γενέσθαι [52] μόνον περικόψαντα τὰ λοιπὰ ὅσα περικείμεθα· ὥστε [53] ἐξελθεῖν σπεύδειν ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἀγανακτεῖν ἐπὶ θάτερα [54] δεδεμένους, ἵνα τῷ ὅλῳ αὐτῶν περιπτυξώμεθα καὶ μηδὲν [55] μέρος ἔχοιμεν, ᾧ μὴ ἐφαπτόμεθα θεοῦ. Another important text from the same period in which union is described in erotic terms is I.6 [1] 7.12–39.

[100] The word "experience" translates πάθημα at VI.9 [9] 9.39, which refers to the joy (εὐπαθεῖ) just mentioned on the previous line (cf. VI.7 [38] 34.30 and 38), in turn an echo of Plato, *Phaedrus* 247d4.

> most in love with, and that these earthly loves are mortal and harmful, and loves only of images, and that they change because it was not what is really and truly loved nor our good nor what we seek.[101] But there is our true love, with whom also we can be united, having a part in him and truly possessing him, not embracing him in the flesh from outside. But 'whoever has seen knows what I am saying'[102], that the soul has another life and draws near, and has already come near and has a part in him, and so is in a state to know that the giver of true life is present and we need nothing more. But quite otherwise we must put away other things and take our stand only in this, and become this alone, cutting away all the other things in which we are encased; so we must be eager to go out of here and be impatient at being bound to other things, that we may embrace it with the whole of ourselves and have no part with which we do not touch God.

The only observation I think is required here is about the words μεταλαβόντα αὐτοῦ ("having a part in him," viz., in the One) at VI.9 [9] 9.45. P. Hadot[103] rightly points out that the seemingly paradoxical idea of participation in something that is unqualifiedly simple for the soul means to come to resemble the One and to direct the whole of its activity toward it (cf. I.7 [54] 1.11–12, I.8 [51] 8.42–44). And once Intellect and its activity have been transcended, it would seem that the soul's condition in union can only be one of love, *eros*.

The second text is from VI.7 [38], the long treatise on *How the multitude of the forms came into being, and on the Good*. This text describes the joy experienced by the soul in encountering its beloved, the One. Again, the experience is compared to the encounter between lovers (VI.7 [38] 34.15), and the joy is so great that the soul would not wish to exchange it for anything in the world. The passage is VI.7 [38] 34.8–28:[104]

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[101] Cf. Plato, *Symposium* 212a3–5.

[102] Cf. Chapter 5 note 10.

[103] P. Hadot (1994, 195).

[104] VI.7 [38] 34.8–28: Ὅταν δὲ τούτου εὐτυχήσῃ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ ἥκῃ πρὸς [9] αὐτήν, μᾶλλον δὲ παρὸν φανῇ ὅταν ἐκείνη ἐκνεύσῃ τῶν [10] παρόντων καὶ παρασκευάσασα αὑτὴν ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα καλὴν [11] καὶ εἰς ὁμοιότητα ἐλθοῦσα (ἡ δὲ παρασκευὴ καὶ ἡ κόσμησις [12] δήλη που τοῖς παρασκευαζομένοις), ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἐν αὑτῇ [13] ἐξαίφνης φανέντα (μεταξὺ γὰρ οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔτι δύο ἀλλ' ἓν [14] ἄμφω· οὐ γὰρ ἂν διακρίναις ἔτι, ἕως πάρεστι· μίμησις δὲ [15] τούτου καὶ οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἐρασταὶ καὶ ἐρώμενοι συγκρῖναι θέλοντες), [16] καὶ οὔτε σώματος ἔτι αἰσθάνεται, ὅτι ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ, [17] οὔτε ἑαυτὴν ἄλλο τι λέγει, οὐκ ἄνθρωπον, οὐ ζῷον, οὐκ ὄν, [18] οὐδὲ πᾶν (ἀνώμαλος γὰρ ἡ τούτων πως θέα), καὶ οὐδὲ [19] σχολὴν ἄγει πρὸς αὐτὰ οὔτε θέλει, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ ζητήσασα [20] ἐκείνῳ παρόντι ἀπαντᾷ κἀκεῖνο ἀντ' αὐτῆς βλέπει· τίς δὲ [21] οὖσα βλέπει οὐδὲ τοῦτο σχολάζει ὁρᾶν. Ἔνθα δὴ οὐδὲν [22] πάντων ἀντὶ τούτου ἀλλάξαιτο, οὐδ' εἴ τις αὐτῇ

> But when the soul has good fortune with it,[105] and it comes to it, or rather, being there already, appears, when the soul turns away from the things that are here,[106] and has prepared by making itself as beautiful as possible and has come to likeness (the preparation and the adornments are clearly understood, I think, by those who are preparing themselves) and it sees it in itself suddenly[107] appearing (for there is nothing between, nor are there still two but both are one; nor could you still make a distinction while it is present: lovers and their beloved here below imitate this in their will to be united), it does not still perceive its body, that it is in it, and does not speak of itself as anything else, not man, or living thing, or being, or all (for the contemplation of these would be something disturbing), and it has no time for them, but it has been seeking it, and meets that when it is present, and looks at that instead of itself; but it has not even time to see who the soul is that looks. There, truly, it would not exchange this for anything in the world, not even if someone handed over the whole universe to it, because there is nothing still better, and nothing that is more a good; for it does not run up higher, and all the other things are on its way down, even if they are in the realm above. So then it has the ability to judge rightly and to know that this is what it desired, and to establish that there is nothing better than it. For there is no deceit there; or where could it find anything truer than the truth?

Two brief remarks should suffice about this passage. The first is about the word ἐξαίφνης at VI.7 [38] 34.13 (see also V.3 [49] 17.29, V.5 [32] 3.13, 7.34, VI.7 [38] 36.19).[108] In keeping with my observations at the end of Section 3 of Chapter 5, I think that this term cannot be taken to denote the manifestation of personal love and care on the part of the One similar to Christian grace,[109] nor as

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πάντα τὸν [23] οὐρανὸν ἐπιτρέποι, ὡς οὐκ ὄντος ἄλλου ἔτι ἀμείνονος οὐδὲ [24] μᾶλλον ἀγαθοῦ· οὔτε γὰρ ἀνωτέρω τρέχει τά τε ἄλλα πάντα [25] κατιούσης, κἂν ᾖ ἄνω. Ὥστε τότε ἔχει καὶ τὸ κρίνειν καλῶς [26] καὶ γιγνώσκειν, ὅτι τοῦτό ἐστιν οὗ ἐφίετο, καὶ τίθεσθαι, ὅτι [27] μηδέν ἐστι κρεῖττον αὐτοῦ. Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀπάτη ἐκεῖ· ἢ [28] ποῦ ἂν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἀληθέστερον τύχοι; Cf. also VI.7 [38] 22.5–10.

[105] I.e., with receiving the Good alone: cf. VI.7 [38] 34.7–8.

[106] ARMSTRONG translates τῶν παρόντων at VI.7 [38] 34.9–10 as "the things that are there." This is perhaps a typo for "the things that are here" (i.e., the present things), as I translate it (likewise, e.g., Bréhier 1924–1938: "des choses présentes"; Harder 1956–1971: "was gegenwärtig ist"; Igal 1982–1998: "las cosas presentes"; Faggin 2000: "dalle cose presenti"; Gerson 2018: "the things that are present").

[107] Likely an echo of Plato, *Symposium* 210e4; cf. also *Letters* VII.341c7, *Parmenides* 156d1–e7.

[108] For some further observations on this point, cf. Rist (1967, 224–225), P. Hadot (1988, 58–59).

[109] Cf. Dodds (1960, 7).

analogous to the favor and revelation received by the gods through prayer, theurgy, and magic that one finds in the *Corpus Hermeticum* or the *Chaldean Oracles*.[110] The giving of love by the One, far from being the expression of such direct intervention on the part of the One (cf. v.5 [32] 12.40–50), is a necessity of the nature of a single principle of all reality that is essentially impersonal[111] (I will briefly return to the question of the impersonality of the One in the Conclusion). However, it may be significant to note that the suddenness of the encounter, besides being a likely reference to a Platonic expression from the ascent of the *Symposium* (210e4; cf. note 107 above), sits well with the idea that it is the One itself that lifts the lover into union (cf. Plotinus vi.7 [38] 22.17–19). The second point is about the phrase οὐδ᾽ ἔτι δύο ἀλλ᾽ ἓν ἄμφω at vi.7 [38] 34.13–14. This phrase does not imply the annihilation of the soul in union. As Armstrong notes, "ἓν ἄμφω is always used by Plotinus of a perfect union in which the two united retain their distinct natures"[112] (cf. iv.4 [28] 2.27–29).

The third and final text brings together the theme of touch (which, as I observed earlier, may be understood as the privileged sense of the sexual encounter, in turn conceived as a broad metaphor for union), the hypernoetic character of the experience of union (which can be put into words only when it is not actually taking place), and the metaphor of light and vision (a most familiar theme from Plato,[113] often found in Plotinus and the Platonic tradition). The text is v.3 [49] 17.24–38:[114]

> …but how can one describe the absolutely simple? But it is enough if one touches it intellectually; but when it has done so, while the touching lasts, it is absolutely impossible, nor has it time, to speak; but it is afterwards that it is able to reason about it. One must believe one has seen, when

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[110] Cf. Reale (2004, vii, 305–308, 319–324) for an account of the problem in these texts.

[111] Cf. Armstrong (1977, 67–68).

[112] ARMSTRONG (vii, 192–193 note 1); cf. Sleeman and Pollet (1980, s.v. ἄμφω, b) for references.

[113] Cf. Beierwaltes (1957, especially 37–97).

[114] v.3 [49] 17.24–38: …ἐν δὲ πάντη ἁπλῷ [25] διέξοδος τίς ἐστιν; Ἀλλ᾽ ἀρκεῖ κἂν νοερῶς ἐφάψασθαι· [26] ἐφαψάμενον δέ, ὅτε ἐφάπτεται, πάντη μηδὲν μήτε δύνασθαι [27] μήτε σχολὴν ἄγειν λέγειν, ὕστερον δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ [28] συλλογίζεσθαι. Τότε δὲ χρὴ ἑωρακέναι πιστεύειν, ὅταν ἡ [29] ψυχὴ ἐξαίφνης φῶς λάβῃ· τοῦτο γάρ [τοῦτο τὸ φῶς] παρ᾽ [30] αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτός· καὶ τότε χρὴ νομίζειν παρεῖναι, ὅταν [31] ὥσπερ θεὸς ἄλλος [ὅταν] εἰς οἶκον καλοῦντός τινος ἐλθὼν [32] φωτίσῃ· ἢ μηδ᾽ ἐλθὼν οὐκ ἐφώτισεν. Οὕτω τοι καὶ ψυχὴ [33] ἀφώτιστος ἄθεος ἐκείνου· φωτισθεῖσα δὲ ἔχει, ὃ ἐζήτει, [34] καὶ τοῦτο τὸ τέλος τἀληθινὸν ψυχῇ, ἐφάψασθαι φωτὸς [35] ἐκείνου καὶ αὐτῷ αὐτὸ θεάσασθαι, οὐκ ἄλλου φωτί, ἀλλ᾽ [36] αὐτό, δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ὁρᾷ. Δι᾽ οὗ γὰρ ἐφωτίσθη, τοῦτό ἐστιν, ὃ [37] δεῖ θεάσασθαι· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἥλιον διὰ φωτὸς ἄλλου. Πῶς ἂν [38] οὖν τοῦτο γένοιτο; Ἄφελε πάντα. ARMSTRONG's translation, with minor changes.

> the soul suddenly[115] takes light: for this is from him and he is it; we must think that he is present when, like another god whom someone called to his house, he comes and brings light to us: for if he had not come, he would not have brought the light. So the unenlightened soul does not see [god];[116] but when it is enlightened it has what it sought, and this is the soul's true end, to touch that light and see it by itself, not by another light, but see the light which is also the means of seeing. It must see that light by which it is enlightened: for we do not see the sun by another light than his own.[117] How then can this happen? Take away everything![118]

Far from implying disdain for things seen (or heard: cf. V.1 [10] 12.15–21), both literally and figuratively, the stripping away of everything that would hinder a face-to-face encounter with pure light (cf. V.5 [32] 7) is itself a way (in fact, the *only* way according to Plotinus) to come in contact with that which is beyond everything, the One that has nothing and gives what it does not have (cf. V.2 [11] 1.8 and VI.7 [38] 17.3–6). Once the soul has reached noetic reintegration, none of the things it sees in the light of the One—at this point a pleonasm—would contribute to a better vision; and that includes noetic activity. In his commentary to treatise V.3 [49], Ham rightly remarks that for Plotinus the thought of clinging to life in Intellect is a kind of temptation for the soul,[119] a temptation which, if not resisted, would prevent the individual soul from entering the final stage of the ascent. Therefore, in order to experience union, the soul is called to leave behind not only its attachments to the sensible through an ethical ἀφαίρεσις, but also its best accomplishment yet, namely, the state of achieved noetic reintegration. For in still clinging to this state the soul will fail to meet the One on the One's own terms, that is to say, as the supremely loved

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[115] See the remarks I just made on ἐξαίφνης above.

[116] V.3 [49] 17.33: ἄθεος ἐκείνου. The term ἄθεος can mean both "without god" (as rendered by the majority of translators) and "without vision" (the translation preferred by MacKenna 1917–1930, and MacKenna and Page 1969: "without that vision"; Bréhier 1924–1938: "quand'elle ne le contemple pas"; Cilento 1947–1949: "deserta della visione di Lui"). However, as Beierwaltes (1991, 248–249; cf. also Ham 2000, 95–96 note 230) points out, the only occurrence of the latter meaning indicated by Liddell and Scott (1996, s.v. ἄθεος (B).1) is this line of Plotinus (from a conjecture by Volkmann 1883: ἀθέ <ατ> ος). In my translation I follow Beierwaltes (1991: "sähe […] [Gott] nicht").

[117] Cf. VI.9 [9] 9.55–58, discussed above.

[118] See Chapter 5 note 137 for parallels of this formula in the *Enneads*.

[119] Ham (2000, 278). This is perhaps the common temptation of Aristotelians, a few Platonists, and some Christian theologians of Plotinus' time; cf. ARMSTRONG (V, 130–131 note 1).

(ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15) which one cannot grasp by way of thought (not even noetic thought), but only in love.

It may be worth reminding ourselves that just like any other relation predicated of the One, for Plotinus the loving communion or intercourse (συνουσία: VI.9 [9] 7.23, 11.20) between the individual soul and the One is non-reciprocal, in accordance with the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation discussed in the previous chapter. The love by which the soul comes to be united with the One is not the love that the soul encounters *in* the One. Moreover, although it is through as strict a contact as we can envision that a relation with the One is established, the One is not itself in contact with anything but transcends all.[120] For this reason, the relation between the soul and the One is not the mutual affair that takes place between ordinary lovers, but rather the non-reciprocal rapport between a permanent lover and a permanent beloved. For the One is a beloved that is never a lover (or rather a lover whose love is never directed to anything other than itself), although it should be added that the One, unlike some human beloved, is a beloved that does not reject or frustrate the soul's love, once this has been completely purified and directed to the One alone. It follows that, in spite of what I have been arguing in this subsection, even the metaphor of human love, when one is pressed to justify it in some of its details, ultimately fails to express what takes place in union.

One may object and ask: Is it not of the essence of love to aim at reciprocation or mutuality, at least ideally? I may love someone disinterestedly, but to have my love reciprocated would seem to be something I should desire in principle, even when lucidly aware that reciprocation may never happen. Is there no reciprocation whatsoever in the *unio mystica*?

The objection is less problematic than it seems if we consider that for the center of the soul in union, reciprocation may be understood precisely as the absence of all hindrance in its love of the One: fully purified, the soul's love finally meets a beloved that will never leave it wanting. In union, reciprocation means simply that the One "allows" the individual soul to love it because the soul has gradually transformed its love and in the end has become capable of loving the Good correspondingly. I might add that within Plotinus' metaphysical framework, there is nothing inconsistent with this way of loving, for in so relating to the One as the permanent beloved, the soul in its center loves the best object of love in the best possible way, thus being itself the best soul that it could ever be. And if I am correct about this, since love always desires what is best for its beloved, it may be inferred that if the One is a lover at all, there is no better way for it to love than by infinitely bestowing on its beloved the very love by which alone it can be loved (cf. VI.7 [38] 22.19).

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[120] Cf. Beierwaltes (1991, 165–167). On the transcendence of the One, see again VI.9 [9] 6.55 and references in Chapter 1 note 10.

Therefore, it seems to me that the question of whether in union love comes to an end should not only be answered negatively, but might also have to be emphatically reversed, namely: How could love come to an end in union if what takes place in it is comparable to the contact between lover and beloved in the experience of love? As Pigler points out, the greatest resemblance to the One is not in the field of thought, but in that of love.[121] For if the beloved is itself love, and love of an infinite kind, in order to come in contact with the One as what it truly is, not only will knowledge be insufficient and love necessary, but the soul will also have to sustain this contact in love, and love of an infinite kind, in accordance with the Principle of Assimilation. Thus, since the Plotinian One is both ἔρως (VI.8 [39] 15.1) and ὑπερνόησις (VI.8 [39] 16.32), there is no question of knowing it perfectly, but only of loving it; or rather, to know it perfectly means also to know the limits of knowledge in this regard: *docta ignorantia*, if there ever was any. As I agued earlier in the previous chapter, when what is at issue is the supremely lovable, Plotinus seems to say that once the soul has put itself in the position of loving it correspondingly, knowledge will add nothing to love. In fact, the pure presence of the beloved will free even love of its merely appetitive aspect and will sustain the joy that the lover feels (or rather, *is*) at being lovingly in its presence.

At the end of its journey, all that is left for the soul is to renounce its last possession—noetic activity—and, by abandoning itself (VI.9 [9] 11.23: ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ) to its Good, meet it in the only way it can be truly met: in love.

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[121] Pigler (2002, 186).

Conclusion

1 A Summary Account of the Results of This Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a reconstruction of Plotinus' understanding of love—what I have occasionally referred to as his erotics—and its systematic significance for his thought as a way to introduce the salient features of his metaphysics. In other words, love was employed as the key concept by which virtually all major aspects of Plotinus' philosophy may be clarified and brought together in a coherent whole. The material was divided in two parts and organized around the traditional themes of the derivation of all reality from the One conceived as the Principle of all things (Part 1) and the ascent of the soul to the One conceived as the Good or the End of all things (Part 2).

In Chapter 1, I focused on the question of the derivation of all reality from the One. A treatement of this question constitutes the indispensable groundwork for dealing with our main topic. I argued that Plotinus' metaphysics is regulated by a fundamental law to which I referred as the Principle of Prior Simplicity. According to this principle, whatever is composite ultimately derives from something simple, from which it follows that the whole of reality, or the multiplicity of things, must proceed from a single source which is utterly simple: the One, Principle of all things. Further, the One is not only simple, but also unique: there can be only one Principle.

Since language introduces multiplicity, I touched on the difficulty of speaking about a Principle of such a nature. This difficulty is tentatively overcome through a double strategy: the language of negation (the so-called *via negativa*), which includes the language of eminence in the form of expressions of transcendence and superlatives; and the language of analogy (the so-called *via positiva*), by which Plotinus tries to speak about the Principle indirectly through some of its effects.

The modality of the derivation of multiplicity from the One is explained through one of the central laws of Plotinian metaphysics, which I labeled the Principle of Double Activity. I highlighted a number of possible lexical and conceptual antecedents of this principle (most notably Aristotle, Stoicism, and Plato), and concluded that the principle is likely Plotinus' way of explaining what he took to be Plato's views about metaphysical causation. The Principle of Double Activity chiefly states that everything in the Plotinian universe (with the exception of lower matter) operates in accordance with a twofold activity: the activity of the essence (primary or internal) and the activity from the essence (secondary or external). These two activities, described through

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an array of metaphors (e.g., fire-heat, snow-cold, etc.) stand in a relation of original (activity of the essence) to copy (activity from the essence), and occur of necessity. The activity of the essence is the very being of the thing whose activity it is it constantly sustains the existence of the activity from the essence while at the same time maintaining its independence from it. It should also be noticed that the process of derivation does not reproduce a temporal sequence of events, but rather illustrates the relation of dependence of simultaneously existing but ontologically different planes of reality.

As to the question of whether the Plotinian hypostases of the One, Intellect, and Soul are real beings having their own relatively independent existence or whether they are aspects of one single reality, I argued that for Plotinus this is a false dichotomy, and that it is possible to give a positive reply to each side of the alternative. Thus, on the one hand, to say that the hypostases are in the soul does not mean that their existence depends on the soul which contains them, but that it is possible for the soul to turn and become similar to them through a process of assimilation—the theme of Chapter 6. But in order for this to be possible, the hypostases must exist actually prior to the soul's assimilation, in accordance with a principle I called the Principle of Prior Actuality, which states that the proper actuality of a given potentiality is prior in being to that potentiality. I concluded that this double status of the hypostases—as existing independently and as being somewhat present in the rest of reality, particularly in the individual soul—is what grounds both the continuity and the discontinuity of Plotinian metaphysics. Building on previous studies on love in Plotinus, I suggested that this dynamic of continuity and discontinuity can be understood in terms of the different types of *eros* present at each level of reality of Plotinian metaphysics as traces of the original love of the One, and dedicated Chapter 2 to justify this suggestion.

The central thesis of the second chapter was that the source of the procession of all reality is the superabundance of the love that the single principle of all, the One, bears to itself. Thus, the One is the source of all love, and love is, at its very origin, a donative rather than an appetitive force: "the power of all things" (V.4 [7] 2.38). The emergence of multiplicity from the utter simplicity of the One is governed by two principles: the Principle of Superabundance, according to which each thing that is perfect in its own kind overflows and thus generates something other than itself, and the Principle of Henologic Giving, according to which the One gives to derived reality what the One does not itself have, namely, love for the One as other than the entity receiving that love.

Thus, the love of the One, in being communicated to all derived reality, from self-love becomes love of another, and specifically love for the One conceived of as the Good. What originally and necessarily springs from the One in accordance with the Principle of Superabundance is a unified entity—Loving Intellect or intelligible matter—charged with love for the One itself. This love, in turn, decreases in intensity as it is communicated to the rest of reality. Thus, love is the element of both continuity and differentiation in Plotinus' metaphysics: it is a trace of the One, variously manifested, which pervades all reality. And yet, love signals not only the presence of the One but also its absence, for the One, in its self-abiding love, remains absolutely transcendent and ever different from all multiplicities ultimately deriving from it, including Intellect. This double dynamic of presence and absence, continuity and discontinuity, was also expressed in terms of two further principles that control all derivation in Plotinian metaphysics: the Principle of Superiority of Cause to Effect, according to which a cause is superior (in being, unity, and erotic self-identity) to its effects, and the Principle of Likeness of Cause and Effect, according to which a cause communicates something of itself to its effects.

The communication of all love from the One is also what allows derived reality to structure itself hierarchically in fully formed hypostases. As I stated in the Introduction, the unfolding of each derived hypostasis can be understood as a three-phase non-temporal event which has *eros* as its governing force at each of its phases: first, the superabundance of *eros* proceeding from the higher hypostasis; second, the reversion of this *eros* toward the generating hypostasis to reproduce the unity of the generator at its own ontological level (what I called the Principle of Reversion); third, the communication of (gradually diminished) *eros* which constitutes the first stage of the next hypostasis or level of reality.

The difference between the hypostases as they unfold from the Principle is conceived as a decrease of their internal unity and a widening of the gap between their identity and the ultimate goal of all desire, the Good. Thus, according to the Principle of Henologic Giving, the One gives what it does not have to Intellect, to wit, a love for the One that is not self-love. The result of this love is form, which too is absent in the formless One: out of love for the One, Intellect comes about as a fully formed hypostasis (Thinking Intellect) by noetically replicating the unqualified unity and self-love of the Principle on its own plane of existence. Noetic *eros* is understood as a kind of friendship that binds all the intelligibles (i.e., the Forms or Ideas) in a unity in which each Form eternally and variously interpenetrates, reflects, or implicates all the others. Intellect, in turn, gives what it *does* have—or rather, *is* (i.e., form)—to soul, which becomes a fully formed hypostasis by reverting toward Intellect and contemplating its contents dianoetically or discursively. Finally, soul in its lower part (i.e., the World-Soul or Nature), restless because unable to emerge as a separate hypostasis in its own right, tries to replicate externally the noetic unity contemplated by the Soul-Hypostasis by communicating the forms it receives from above to what lies below itself. In this way it gives shape to the sensible universe, with pre-cosmic matter as the necessary substratum of enmattered forms, and individual souls as the agents which inform and animate the various portions of this universe. The sensible cosmos is understood as a living being whose *eros* coincides with the sympathy of its parts, but whose nature also implies separation and a certain enmity among them. In connection with this, I provided a few remarks concerning the notions of time, eternity, and discursiveness as instrumental to understand both the different ways of being of Intellect and soul and the difference of their respective unity and love.

At the lowest level of existence, we find pre-cosmic matter, whose generation and nature remain somewhat controversial topics in Plotinus scholarship. Pre-cosmic matter is the element in the Plotinian universe which completely lacks form and unity. A mere "aspiration to existence" (III.6 [26] 7.13), it can only reflect form without ever actually receiving it, and is both utterly unable to revert toward its generator and to produce something after itself. In addition to this, matter is the principle of evil in the sense that it actively deceives the individual soul by presenting itself as a surrogate of the forms it merely reflects, thus enticing the soul to take excessive interest in it and forget that its true destiny lies in higher realities. However, individual souls that are active in the sensible universe are not necessarily deceived by matter. In fact, the love originating in the One is also naturally present in them as the fundamental resource that allows them to turn away from primarily sensible concerns and make their way back to the One, now conceptualized as the Good. I also observed that this connatural love is at the same time the factor that could temper what might appear as a paradox of Plotinus's metaphysics, namely, the fact that matter, the principle of evil, still seems to originate from a source that is absolutely good, the Good.

The journey of the soul to the One, referred to as the ascent, was investigated in Part 2 under three headings: the nature and variety of *eros* belonging to the soul, with particular focus on the *eros* essentially belonging to the soul and pointing to the One as its ultimate goal (Chapter 3); the goal of this connatural *eros*, namely, the One conceived as the Good or universal final cause (Chapter 4); and the path or journey leading to this goal, the ascent (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

Chapter 3, as well as being an investigation of the nature and variety of the *eros* found in the soul, was at the same time an occasion to discuss Plotinus' exegetic relation to Plato and a reading of Plotinus' own treatise on *eros*, *Enneads* III.5 [50]. I discussed Plotinus' understanding of *eros* in the context of what he takes to be a faithful interpretation of Plato's views on the same topic, in particular as he works at reconciling some seemingly contradictory statements found in the dialogues, with special focus on the story of Eros' birth in the *Symposium*. I provided an interpretation of the correspondences that Plotinus' establishes between the mythical characters found in some of the speeches of the *Symposium* (and of the *Phaedrus*) and the elements of his own metaphysics presented in Chapter 2. Lastly, I argued that for Plotinus human experience affords several qualitatively different manifestations of love (summarily classified as pure, mixed, and deviant), but that what is most proper to *eros* in its pure form is that it is not an accidental feature of the soul, but a *hypostasis* and an *ousia* directed toward the Good. As such, *eros* is a natural and essential endowment of the individual soul and the fundamental condition of possibility of the ascent.

From this I moved on to discuss the traditional theme of the return of the soul to the One—the ascent—starting with an analysis of the One as the Good, goal of the connatural *eros* belonging to the soul, in Chapter 4. I argued that Plotinus endorses the idea that we love or desire only what is good (at least in some respect), and that, in turn, what is good is naturally desired precisely insofar as it is good. In other words, desire can only aim at some good, while what is good is naturally the aim of desire for no other reason than its being good.

Insofar as the One is understood, not as one among many finite goods, but as the Good, or the most loved (ἐρασμιώτατον: VI.7 [38] 32.25, 33.14; ἀγαπητότατον: VI.8 [39] 16.15), its status is that of a universal final cause, what I referred to as the End. But as we saw in Part 1, the One is also the Principle of all, so that what from the perspective of that which desires it is the universal final cause, from the perspective of that which derives from it is the universal efficient cause. In relation to this, I went on briefly to consider Plotinus' critical assessment of Aristotle's First Mover. I argued that according to Plotinus the Aristotelian identification of the universal final cause with the First Mover is insufficient to explain the very love which reality bears to the Mover. In order to explain this love, and in particular the love that is naturally present in the soul, we must understand the One not only as the object of love, but also as its giver. Principle and End are therefore conceptually distinct but actually identical. The main reason for this identity is that if the final goal of all love were not at the same time the primordial giver of that love, it seems that love itself would remain unexplained.

Since Plotinus thinks that it is necessary that there be a One and that we conceive of it as the Principle and the Good, I briefly discussed the nature of this necessity. While I have no doubt that Plotinus was personally convinced of the existence of the One, from the standpoint of reason (which I suggested may be understood in the Kantian sense, as an aspiration to construct a complete system of principles), I argued that the necessity involved in his positing of the One as both Principle and End is primarily explanatorily.

Having established that the soul possesses a connatural *eros* directing it to its source, and that this source is the One conceived of as the ultimate desideratum, or the Good, of the soul and of all derived reality, the central contention of Part 2 was also established: love proves to be a fundamental concept for understanding not only the process of derivation of all reality from the One as the Principle of all things (the focus of Part 1), but also the inverse process of the return of the soul to it, the ascent. The goal of the ascent is the Good understood as the supremely loved. This is nothing else than the One, which while from the perspective of derivation was conceived of as the universal efficient cause (the Principle), now from the perspective of return is understood as the universal final cause (the End), the goal of the soul's ascent investigated in the last two chapters, first by providing some general observations about some of the preconditions and main features of the return journey to the One (Chapter 5), then by analyzing the journey itself in its three fundamental steps of purification, noetic reintegration, and union (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 5 I argued that the possibility of succeeding in the ascent is subject to two major preconditions. The first is an instantiation of what I called the Principle of Assimilation, according to which assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior attunement of the former to the latter. Thus, the first precondition states that the ascending soul ought to attune itself to the goal of the ascent by becoming able to love its infinitely lovable desideratum with a love that is itself infinite. Failure to do so would result in a love which, being inadequate to its aim, would miss it. The second precondition is that in order for the soul to be capable of ascending at all, it must possess an inner similarity to the higher realities to which it is ascending. This, in turn, is an instantiation of the Principle of Affinity, which states that assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior affinity between the two terms. In our specific case, the similarity between soul and higher reality is found in the soul's higher part or intellect, on whose account reintegration in Intellect is possible, and, within this higher part, the so-called center of the soul, in virtue of which the soul is capable of achieving union with the One.

In Plotinus' universe, the ability to undertake the journey of ascent and achieve union with the Good is reserved to what I called the subject of the ascent, namely, the individual soul, here characterized as the bearer of the love for the One. In this regard, I provided some observations on Plotinus' view of individuality in connection to what I take to be his somewhat imperspicuous views on Forms of individuals, as well as on the issue of reincarnation, which Plotinus seems to have genuinely endorsed. Moreover, in the journey of return to the Principle, *eros* can be understood and function as a method of ascent along the methods of music and dialectic, but more fundamentally it is, for the individual soul, the regulative force of all ascending movement.

In the context of providing some clarifications on the terminology of ascent adopted by Plotinus, I briefly discussed the difference between reversion (i.e., that stage in the necessary, non-temporal dynamic whereby a hypostasis emerges from a superior hypostasis) and conversion (i.e., the movement whereby the soul turns from lower commitments to reintegration in its higher part). I also touched on the issue of the role of the One in the ascent. In Plotinus we do not find anything that resembles a direct intervention or aid of the One on behalf of the soul in its journey of return to its source. However, there are some factors in his metaphysics which may be feasibly read as fulfilling the task of this direct aid, such as the generosity of the One (or self-diffusiveness of the Good), the notion of an undescended soul, and, most notably for our topic, the very love for the One bestowed on the soul by the One itself and naturally directing the soul to it.

In the closing section of Chapter 5 I argued that there are four features that are common to all the stages of the ascent. The first feature is that the passage from a lower to a higher stage entails, not an addition, but a subtraction of something that was present on the lower stage. Secondly, each stage presupposes the one prior to it, not in the sense that what is lower is still actually present in what is higher, but in the sense that in order to be legitimately found at a given stage the soul must have undergone the "subtraction" of the main feature characterizing the lower stage. Therefore, what is subtracted cannot be said to be simply absent for the soul that has established itself at a higher level; it is rather present precisely *qua subtracted*. If a given subtraction does not taken place, the soul simply fails to ascend to the level that corresponds to that substraction. Third, just like each stage of the process of derivation implied a decrease of unity and of love, so in the contrary movement of return every stage entails an increase in unity and in the intensity of love. In this way, the subtraction of a lower feature is not a purely negative procedure, but the necessary condition for what counts as an ascending movement, namely, the increase of unity and love. Finally, it is not necessary that the particular feature, practice, or activity that assimilates the individual soul to a reality on a higher level be found in that reality at that level. This occurs in accordance with the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation, which states that that in which a thing participates is other than that because of which that thing participates in it. A non-reciprocal view of participation, I maintained, is probably also Plotinus' response to one of the objections to participation raised in the first part of Plato's *Parmenides*. I also argued that within Plotinus metaphysics the Principle of Non-reciprocal Participation applies systematically to all relation of lower to higher reality in agreement with other principles discussed earlier.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, I followed a well-established scheme in limiting the main stages of the ascent to three and in referring to them as purification (ascent to soul), noetic reintegration (ascent to Intellect), and union (ascent to the One). By means of purification the individual soul converts its attention from the sensible world toward immaterial reality. It does this, first by bringing about a harmonization of its "parts" through lower (civic or political) virtue, and then by habituating itself to the newly discovered kinship with the intelligible through higher (purificatory) virtue. The practice of higher virtue in a sense already coincides with the introduction of the soul into the next stage of the ascent, noetic reintegration. Achieved noetic reintegration is called *eudaimonia* and amounts to the soul's full reintegration in its highest part, its individual intellect. This condition makes of the soul what in a sense it always already was: a member of the intelligible realm whose activity is the noetic grasp of itself and every other intelligible within Intellect. At this point I added some remarks on two topics that are central to the first two stages of the ascent in Plotinus, his views on ethics and on arguments and demonstrations. I first considered the issue of ethics in light of some likely criticisms that a modern reader might raise against Plotinus' views. I argued that while Plotinus stresses the importance—indeed, the necessity—of moral behavior and care for both other individual souls and for the cosmos as a whole, in his system ethics is not an end in itself but a means to an end, this end being union with the One. As for the issue of dialectic, I pointed out that while arguments and demonstrations are not a substitute for the soul's process of purification and noetic reintegration, they are nonetheless an important aid in that process. In fact, they may be viewed as a method of ascent which contributes to foster one's conviction about the possibility of the return journey and the truthfulness of its final goal.

Moving on to the last step on the path of ascent to the One, I remarked that although the essential activity of Intellect is the noetic grasp of its own contents, Intellect is what it is only by having its *eros* permanently directed toward the One, whose unqualified unity it replicates in accordance with its own essence, to wit, noetically. If the soul is to achieve union with the Good, it ought to strip itself of the last vestige of multiplicity that separates it from its beloved. This element is noetic activity itself, whereby the One is grasped only reflectively in the unified totality of the intelligibles. In union, this reflective distance is overcome and the individual soul comes into direct contact with its beloved by becoming fully assimilated to that which in it is most similar to the One: the center of the soul. I argued that, even though Plotinus' concept of union is not as transparent as one might wish it to be, I do not find conclusive evidence in the *Enneads* to support the view that in union the soul is completely annihilated. Rather, in its contact with the One the soul has taken away all that was alien to its center and has been transformed in one simple reality: love for the One—*eros*.

2 Some Open Questions

As I bring this study to a close, I would like to touch on some problematic aspects of Plotinus' thought related to our main topic and particularly to the One as the ultimate aim of the connatural love present in the soul. For the sake of order and brevity, the problems I have in mind can be safely gathered under two basic and in many respects opposing criticisms. The first criticism is that Plotinus' conceptualization of the One, both as the Principle and especially as the End, falls short of what is truly good. In other words, something is missing in the notion of the Plotinian One that would make it the first origin and final desideratum, truly ἐρασμιώτατον and truly ἀρχή. This missing element is the notion of personality or personhood. The second criticism points in the opposite direction: not only is there nothing missing in Plotinus' conceptualization of the One as Principle and as End; there is in fact too much. That is, despite the fact that the One as Plotinus conceives it may be found appealing in some respect, ultimately it is either a downright illusion, or else it remains inaccessible to human consciousness, and as such it cannot really be the ultimate goal of the individual soul.

Historically, one of the major traditions voicing the first criticism is that of Christianity. Christian writers of the fourth and fifth century and beyond certainly appreciated the philosophy of Plotinus (and, more broadly, the tradition of pagan Platonism) and put it to use for their own purposes,[1] much like it happened in different ways in the Jewish and Islamic traditions.[2] At the same time, these authors find the philosophy of pagan Platonism insufficient to explain at least two tenets that are central to Christian doctrine: the personality of God (which is further complicated by the doctrine of the Trinity) and divine grace (including the issue of the Incarnation),[3] or, to put it somewhat differently, the personality of God as the very condition of possibility of grace. We should notice that this is not a purely theological issue, since a similar criticism is implicit in the broad tradition of modernity, whether religious or secular, in which the emphasis on the unconditional worth of the individual person and his or her rights already seems to call into question a mode of thought that gives priority to an impersonal, neutral, or supra-personal Good.

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[1] For a short account of the relation between Plotinus and Christianity, see Rist (1999); for longer studies, see de Vogel (1993) and Beierwaltes (2000); for a critical overview of Plotinus' relation to Christianity (with focus on the treatise against the Gnostics), see Catapano (1996).

[2] On the influence of Neoplatonism in Islamic thought and in Jewish thought, see the articles collected in Morewedge (1992) and Goodman (1992) respectively; see also the articles in chapter 10 in Cleary (1997). For brief accounts of the influence of Neoplatonism from late antiquity to modernity, see Wallis (1995, 160–178), Corrigan (2005, 233–239), Emilsson (2017, 373–380); for collections of articles showing the wide range of the influence of Neoplatonism on the subsequent history of thought, see the volumes edited by Blumenthal and Markus (1981), O'Meara (1982), and Harris (2001), the articles in chapters 9–12 in the volume edited

I think that this critique is fair but easy to misinterpret, for if by "person" we mean either the collection of relatively random traits, both physical and psychological, which make up the individual or the unnamable *quid* in which these traits seem to inhere, I do not see how the notion of personality could be a challenge to the Plotinian Good. This reply, it will be objected, is beside the point, for the criticism was not that the One lacks personality conceived of in this or that way, but that it is impersonal or lacks personality in principle, and it is precisely this that makes it less than superlatively lovable, not truly what is most loved. The point of my reply, however, is precisely that we cannot abstract from the specific notion of personality that is at work in the criticism, for the claim here is not that the One is supremely lovable insofar as it is neutral or impersonal, but that if love of the person amounts either to love of any set of qualities with which we identify the person or to love of an undetermined *quid* regardless of the qualities that might be attached to it, then I seriously doubt that love of what is called a person could constitute an improvement upon, or a challenge to, the love for the impersonal One. In the former case, one may very well ask whether what we are talking about is, not love for a person as something unconditionally worth loving, but a kind of habitual (and in some cases perhaps even pathological) attachment to a completely arbitrary combination of accidental traits. As for the latter case, I cannot help wondering how and why the (alleged) personal character of the *quid* devoid of all accidents should be more lovable than the neutral impersonality of the One.

If personality is understood in one of these two ways, the current criticism (as well as my initial reply to it) will not be limited to the impersonality of

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by Cleary (1997), and some of the articles in the collections by Rist (1985), Dillon (1990; 1997), and O'Daly (2001).

[3] A widely referenced text highlighting both the appreciation of the Neoplatonic tradition by a Christian author and aspects of the problem I just pointed out is Book VII of Augustine's *Confessions*.

the One but will extend to the impersonality that seems to characterize the center of the soul in union,[4] whether one endorses a monistic or a theistic reading: if a monistic reading, because the center of the soul is absorbed in the impersonal One; if a theistic reading, because it is not clear how several souls simultaneously united with the One will differ from each other, given that their consciousness, memories, anticipations, noetic activity (in short, the entire history of their ascent to the One which, from an ordinary perspective, would allow us to conceive some difference in their individualities) do not appear to play any important role at the moment of union, or seem to be present only as "subtracted" from the previous stages of the ascent. To be sure, this is a challenge to which in the final analysis even my view of union as simplification of the individual soul to love for the One may not be immune.

Let me make clear that it is not a question of denying that personality might have to be part—perhaps even the most important aspect—of our understanding of the Good, but rather of realizing that if the criticism of Plotinus on this point is to be meaningful, we need a conception of personality fundamentally different from the ones I outlined above. In fact, I would argue that, if personality is conceptualized in any of those ways, not only is it very hard to see why a personal entity should be more lovable than the impersonal Plotinian Good, but probably Plotinus' view of the Good is already a remarkable improvement on those conceptions.

I believe that a citation from a thoughtful article by J.-L. Chrétien, "L'amour du neutre," points us in the direction of the concerns I just voiced. Chrétien writes:[5]

> Il ne suffit pas de dire qu'on aime quelqu'un pour échapper à l'amour du neutre. Lorsque j'aime quelqu'un pour sa beauté ou sa vertu, c'est, que je le veuille ou non, l'impersonnel que j'aime à travers lui. Prendre le contrepied de cette possibilité ne résout pas pour autant la difficulté : aimer quelqu'un pour ses manques et ses défauts, pour ce pour quoi il échappe à l'universel, pour l'imperfection singulière qui est sienne, nous fait certes échapper à l'amour du neutre, mais peut-être aussi à l'amour. Le culte de l'accidentel où se complaisent les amants ne garantit pas l'amour pour l'être de quelqu'un. Dire qu'un aime pour rien, mais seulement « parce que c'était lui, parce que c'était moi », nous approche davantage de la vérité de l'amour, mais posons-nous la question : qui, lui? et qui, moi? que la difficulté sous d'autres formes réapparaît, car la résponse nous

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[4] Cf. Inge (1928–1929, II, 23), ARMSTRONG (I, xxvii).

[5] Chrétien (1990, 344).

> reconduit à l'alternative de l'amour d'un au-delà impersonnel de la personne ou d'une idolâtrie égocentrique des accidents. L'alternative n'est brisée que si l'au-delà de la personne est lui-même personnel à l'infini, que si la lumière dans laquelle apparaît la personne est celle-là même de l'amour qui la fait être elle-même à jamais, que si l'amour lui-même est une personne.

For Chrétien the deadlock of the alternative between the love of something beyond the person (such as Plotinus' One) and what he calls "an egocentric idolatry of accidents"—egocentric, I take it, mainly because I alone am the judge of precisely which accidents should be the object of idolatry, rather than of love—can be broken only if that "beyond" is itself infinitely personal, or if love is itself a person. From Chrétien's perspective, which, as his opus indicates, is in the main the perspective of Christianity informed by the Platonic and Augustinian tradition,[6] it is because love is a person that God, this very love, can reach out to humans from its transcendence and become flesh. Thus, in another thoughtful article dealing with the relation between the different views of the Good and God in Plotinus and the Christian tradition, "Le Bien donne ce qu'il n'a pas,"[7] Chrétien outlines the difference between the Plotinian and the Christian paradigm of donation as the abyss between what I called the Plotinian Principle of Henologic Giving (i.e., "The One gives what it does not have") and the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, in which God, while remaining God, assumes a condition originally foreign to the divine, the condition of the flesh.[8] These are two different modes of transcendence; in Chrétien's own words: "Si le Bien est et reste transcendant à ses dons, Dieu transcende en se donnant cette transcendance même."[9] Or again: "Dieu donne en prenant, en prenant l'homme à soi, en assumant la forme d'esclave. Mais s'abaissant pour prendre il élève ce qu'il prend"[10] (and is able to do so because from the very beginning God is understood as being supremely personal).

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[6] Cf. the observations by J. Bloechl in Chrétien (2002, ix–xi).

[7] Chrétien (1990, 259–274).

[8] See the text from the Christian formula *Fides Damasi*: "nec amisit, quod erat, sed coepit esse, quod non erat" (Denzinger and Schönmetzer 1967, § 72); for further references see Chrétien (1990, 269 notes 22–23 and 25–27).

[9] Chrétien (1990, 274).

[10] Chrétien (1990, 270). This text contains a double echo, scriptural (*Philippians* 2:7) and liturgical (Antiphon I, *O admirabile commercium*, of the Vespers of the Octave of Christmas in the *Breviarium Romanum* 1966, I, 169 and passim; cf. also *Missale Romanum* 1962, 221, § 1031).

But this, I surmise, may already be pointing us in the direction of divine grace, that is, of a direct intervention of the One, or of God, in the soul's journey of ascent to it; and one cannot help wondering whether and how Plotinus' philosophy should (or could) reasonably accommodate such a view (see my remarks in Section 3 of Chapter 5).

The second criticism laid against Plotinus takes us in a very different direction: the transcendence of the One does not need to be supplemented but altogether rejected, for the One is either an alienating illusion or something that is bound to remain inaccessible to human consciousness.

As also suggested by Faggin in the introduction to his Italian translation of the *Enneads*, the gist of this criticism is well expressed in the opening lines of Bertolt Brecht's poem, *Gegen Verführung*: "Laßt euch nicht verführen! / Es gibt keine Wiederkehr."[11] There is no return because there is no One to return to. Thus, to be seduced means to be duped into believing that there is a One or into giving assent to the arguments, with which the *Enneads* abound, suggesting such a conclusion. This criticism is compelling mainly for two reasons: first, because the One such as Plotinus conceives it remains unavailable to ordinary experience, while those who (claim to) have experienced it can offer only very imperfect descriptions of it, and wittingly so (see my observations on this point in Section 3 of Chapter 4); second, because more often than not what we call the One or the Good is only a projection of something that is not the One, most notably human consciousness in its various modifications.[12]

Obviously a criticism of this kind will be in vain unless it could also account for the desire of the One in the soul, that is to say, unless it did not merely deny existence to the One, but also showed that the presence of that love in the soul which, if followed correctly, for Plotinus will lead the soul to the One, can be explained without recourse to an actual One. What, then, is this (alleged) desire for the Good in the soul? From the perspective of this criticism, it must be the very bait of the seduction, that which makes the seduction possible, hence what is most in need of being exposed for what it truly is, if one is to avoid deception. For once we grasp this desire for what it really is, we will see clearly that what we call the One or the Good is something of our own making, an *alter ego* that we project outside of ourselves to objectify our conatus, bring it into view, and thus grow in self-awareness. In this process of objectification, we literally alienate ourselves: directing our desire to something other than ourselves, we make that desideratum, instead of ourselves, our ultimate aim.[13]

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[11] Brecht (1967, VIII, 260); cf. Faggin (2000, xxxiv).

[12] What I have in mind is, for example, Feuerbach's reduction of theology and religion to anthropology, defended in his 1841 work *The Essence of Christianity* (Feuerbach 1957), which could be easily applied to Plotinus' view of the One, especially its transcendence.

If Plotinus' conception of the One is to stand against this rough sketch of the criticism I just provided, it should not be through a dismissal of what in this criticism is seriously worth pondering, namely, the fact that in my conceptualization of a universal final cause which is at the same time the origin of my love for it, there is much of myself which does not strictly belong to that cause. Speaking specifically about the Plotinian One in relation to the image that Intellect has of it, Emilsson expresses lucid awareness of this danger as he alerts his readers to it: "so if you have something you know that you think may be the One, be sure that it isn't!"[14]

But having granted this, we should still ask whether in reducing that first cause and final end to myself, I would still be truthful to all that is actually given in desire. In other words, does this reduction do justice to the nature of love, of Platonic (or Plotinian) *eros*? To claim that what Plotinus is really doing, when he holds that we connaturally desire the infinite One, is simply to project and desire as transcendent something which is actually immanent: would this still be desire as Plotinus thinks it manifests itself to the reflective soul, that is, desire of the Good? If these are leading questions, they are so only as pleas seriously to consider that for Plotinus the desire of the Good seems already to include in its concept two related elements that are particularly relevant to our discussion: first, the awareness, if only in the form of wonder or of a distant presentment, that the Good transcends me and my conceptualizations of it; second, the suspicion that there may be much in me which is lovable in many respects but presumably nothing which is, strictly, *most* lovable (the same could be said about any other desideratum or combination of desiderata which is not the One, for no other reason that it is not the One). Serious consideration of the first element should lead to the realization that a reduction of the One to a projection of consciousness already signals that I am no longer even consciously *trying* to entertain the possibility of such a desideratum; that for whatever reason, the awareness of that possibility *as a possibility* has been effaced, and that therefore it should not come as a surprise that I embrace immanent explanations as the only meaningful explanations of that desire in me. As for the second factor, it should bring me to realize that I can indeed love myself as if I *were* most lovable, but that this love is not love for what *is* most lovable, the One as the universal final cause, unless I myself were the One (once again, the same applies to any other desideratum or combination of desiderata which is not the One, for no other reason that it is not the One)—from which according to Plotinus it would follow that I must have misread the nature of desire in me, my connatural *eros*. If these two factors are seriously considered, one wonders, then, whether what should be reversed is not so much the process by which I envision something immanent as if it were transcendent (*pro*jection), as the procedure by which I represent something transcendent as if it were immanent (*intro*jection). Can it be that the error lies not so much in *alien*ation (thinking of the One as *other* than myself) as in *id*entification (thinking of the One as the *same* as myself, an aspect of myself or an operation of my own consciousness), a reduction of transcendence to immanence?—Or is this crude reversal of the initial criticism already a way of betraying immanence and a pretext to avoid the objection?

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[13] This criticism might have to be formulated somewhat differently if one were to endorse a monistic reading of union, given that according to this interpretation, in union the soul becomes identical with, or is annihilated in, the One.

[14] Emilsson (1999, 288).

I take it that Plotinus's answer to these questions is rooted in a point I have made on different occasions throughout this book, to wit, the idea that our connatural desire for the One does not immediately or effortlessly reveal or deliver the One to us. Instead, it is only a starting point, though an essential one. For Plotinus, desire—*eros*—is always for something good (cf. Section 1 of Chapter 4), but in order to see that it is ultimately for the Good and metabolize this insight by tailoring one's lifestyle to fit it, much work is needed: the work of the ascent journey. Therefore, we should not take for granted that the soul, purely on account of its connatural *eros*, will never mistake intermediate or partial goods for the Good, nor that the soul will always immediately be able to grasp what Plotinus takes to be the right nature of its desire. The path of the ascent is not as smooth as one might wish and the risk of illusion, with respect to both the aim of love and its nature, is always around the corner—all the more so, I surmise, in light of the challenge posed by the origin and nature of matter in Plotinian metaphysics.

Thus, Plotinus will readily admit that what we call desire of the Good in most cases is probably a desire for surrogates of the Good. When this happens, by displacing in transcendence something that is primarily immanent, we not only fall prey to an illusion, but also fail to grasp, and thus betray, the very nature of immanence. But the question remains: Does this have to be the case always and necessarily, methodologically even? Can we not, without falling into an illusion, admit of a desire that longs for more than mere combinations of immanent goods, that is, a desire whose desideratum is more than a projection of consciousness originating in consciousness? In other words, can we reasonably envisage a love which is found *in* consciousness—in the soul—but whose origin is *other than* consciousness, irreducible to an operation *of* consciousness or initiated *by* consciousness?[15] Or is a love of this kind to be discarded—resolutely opposed even—as a source of unnecessary trouble, so that the right course of action would be to work on its pervasive reeducation?

At the risk of oversimplifying the matter, I believe that from the standpoint of the history of ideas the issue of the possibility of finding something in consciousness whose origin may transcend consciousness boils down to a fundamental and perhaps incurable disagreement about the nature of the desire of the Good in us. The disagreement is not exhausted with Plotinus or in Neoplatonism but is carried over into the history of Western philosophy,[16] for instance: in the reflection over that human restlessness which, according to Augustine (*Confessions* I.1.1), can only be appeased in God; in the controversy over Anselm's so-called ontological argument of *Proslogion* 2–4; in the discussion about the origin of the idea of an infinite substance (*idea substantiae infinitae*) in the third of Descartes' *Meditations of First Philosophy*;[17] in the critical reception of Feuerbach's view of God as a projection of human consciousness (cf. note 12 above); or in the more recent debate over the legitimacy of a "theological turn" in French phenomenology.[18]

Plotinus clearly thinks that not everything that is found in the soul can be explained through an immanent reference to the soul and its experiences in the sensible world. As we saw, he maintains that the desire for the One is absolutely prior to all desire, so much so that the One is never experienced through recollection, since that would objectify it by subjecting it to a representational operation of consciousness; instead, the One is always present to the soul (V.5 [32] 12.7–19), prior to any spontaneous or deliberate movement on our part. Accordingly, it would seem that the desire of the One, our connatural *eros*, may be heavily numbed and badly misdirected, but it is not something that will disappear, since it belongs essentially to the soul. Thus, we may convince ourselves that we are content with what we possess or what we are capable of assimilating and that all our desires are just needs to be satisfied cyclically and immanently. But if Plotinus is right, one cannot help wondering whether by doing this we are already failing to notice that we in fact desire more than the satisfaction of particular needs and that once life will have run its course, we will still want more (and better).[19] For to deny that we desire something like the Good while remaining aware of the Good as a possibility would seem already to imply that we are *settling* for less (not against our better judgment, perhaps, but against our actual desire). And to settle for less would mean implicitly to recognize that we indeed desire more, as someone who deeply sympathizes with the tradition of Platonism, Augustine, seems to suggest each time he quotes two lines by Terence: "Since what you will cannot happen, you will what can happen" (my translation).[20]

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[15] Cf. Levinas (1981, 101): "Not everything that is in consciousness would be posited by consciousness." What Levinas has in mind in this particular passage is not the One, but the other human being (*Autrui*); cf. Chapter 6 note 81.

[16] I limit my observation to Western philosophy, but it could be extended both to other philosophical traditions (e.g., that of India, in which the nature of desire is one of the perennial themes of its reflection) and to fields beyond what is ordinarily considered philosophy (e.g., psychoanalysis, in which there is no shortage of attempts at providing a coherent explanation of our deepest aspirations).

[17] Descartes (1897–1910, VII, 34–52, with the relevant objections and replies). Cf. also the second of Malebranche's *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (Malebranche 1958–1984, XII, 49–62).

[18] Cf. Janicaud et. al. (2000), Janicaud (2005).

We must ask then: Can we legitimately envisage a desire whose desideratum shatters the intentionality of a need the origin of which lies invariably within ourselves? How would this desideratum awaken consciousness to its absence, that is to say, to its presence precisely qua desideratum, never subject to the operations by which we apphrehend ordinary objects? And how could the soul respond to this awakening? Finally, though not less importantly, can a desire of this sort be coordinated with the theme of my previous criticism, personhood, or are the two aspects of the problem (and of its solution)—the One's lack of personhood and its absolute, excessive transcendence—bound to remain unharmonizable, thus possibly exposing the questionable character of Plotinus' metaphysics?

If posing such questions is already a way to foster the predicament of a Good that is an illusion or remains at best inaccessible, then Plotinus' thought, heavily laden with the arcane jargon of the philosophical systems of late antiquity, is but a relic of the past that has little or nothing to offer to the present, except perhaps to historians of ideas. But if interrogating ourselves about all this may legitimately be considered more than a rhetorical exercise, could Plotinus' reflection on love still represent something of universal significance, an indication and an invitation that has not completely lost its relevance?

An answer to this question, if at all possible, can be approximated only through a rigorous analysis of love or desire. For if it is in the form of love that the Good, while abiding in its transcendence, is thought to have left an immemorial trace of itself in the soul, it will be only through a thorough inquiry into the nature of love that we may discover that that love is neither illusory nor futile. But even if there is no Good that ever left such a trace, it will still be through a scrupulous inquiry into that same love that the seduction it represents may be revealed and its ruse exposed. Either way, such an inquiry will demand of philosophy that it accept the task of patiently exploring a territory which, with a few exceptions, traditionally has been on the fringes of its interests—the territory of affectivity, *eros*, in all its dimensions.

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[19] Brecht (1967, VIII, 260) does not fail to see this in the second stanza of his *Gegen Verführung*, the continuation of the text I referenced in note 11 above: "Laßt euch nicht betrügen! / Das Leben wenig ist. / Schlürft es in vollen Zügen! / Es wird euch nicht genügen / Wenn ihr es lassen müßt!."

[20] In Terence's own words: "Quoniam non potest id fieri, quod vis, / id velis, quod possit" (*Andria* 305–306). Augustine always writes *possis* instead of *possit* (cf. Augustine, *De beata vita* 4.25, *De Trinitate* XIII.7.10, *De civitate Dei* XIV.25; see Hagendahl 1967, 628), so: "Since what you will cannot happen, you will what you can."

APPENDIX

Principles of Plotinian Metaphysics Introduced in This Study

What follows is a list of the principles of Plotinus' metaphysics introduced in this study ordered alphabetically according to the titles I assigned to them. These principles are gathered here for the reader's convenience and should be considered as general guidelines rather than rigid formulas, in the sense that every time each of them is employed, it needs to be qualified further on the basis of the hypostatic levels on which it is operative, with the likely exception of the Principle of Henologic Giving, which *taken strictly* refers exclusively to the One, as the title assigned to it clearly suggests (but see my observations at the end of Section 5 of Chapter 5). The formulations of the principles are mine and are tentatively reconstructed from the main references indicated in the right column. References are limited to the chief passages of the *Enneads* explicitly discussed when each of the principles was first introduced and examined in the body of the text.

Principle	**Formulation**	**Main references**
Affinity	*Assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior affinity between the two terms.*	III.5 [50] 9.44–45, III.8 [30] 9.19–24
Assimilation	*Assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior attunement of the former to the latter.*	I.6 [1] 9.29–30
Double Activity	*Each thing operates in accordance with a double activity:* of *the essence (internal, or primary) and* from *the essence (external, or secondary).*	V.1 [10] 6.25–37, V.4 [7] 2.26–37
Henologic Giving	*The One gives what it does not have.*	VI.7 [38] 17.3–6
Likeness of Cause and Effect	*A cause communicates something of itself to its effects.*	II.9 [33] 3.8, IV.3 [27] 10.34–35
Non-reciprocal Participation	*That in which a thing participates is other than that because of which that thing participates in it.*	I.2 [19] 1.40–42

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Principle	**Formulation**	**Main references**
Prior Actuality	*The proper actuality of any given potentiality is prior in being to that potentiality.*	VI.1 [42] 26.1–17, V.9 [5] 4.4–10
Prior Simplicity	*Whatever is composite ultimately derives from something simple.*	V.4 [7] 1.5–15
Reversion	*Every generated hypostasis constitutes itself by erotically reverting upon itself and toward its generator, thus replicating the unity of its generator at its own level of existence.*	III.4 [15] 1.8–12, V.2 [11] 1.9–11
Superabundance	*Whatever has reached perfection in its own kind overflows and produces something other than itself, until all possibilities have been realized.*	V.2 [11] 1.7–9, V.3 [49] 16.1–5, V.4 [7] 1.34–39
Superiority of Cause to Effect	*A cause is superior in being, unity, and erotic self-identity to its effects.*	V.1 [10] 6.37–39, V.3 [49] 15.7–11, VI.7 [38] 17.3–6

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